

TURNING TO GOD IN MODERN THEOLOGY  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
KARL BARTH

by

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TO  
MY WIFE



I declare that this thesis  
is written by me and that  
it represents my own work.

## ABSTRACT

Although there have been great advances since the Enlightenment in the understanding of the subjective dimension of man's existence, man has attempted to make his subjectivity the ground of his project in the world, and has thereby come to use others merely as a means toward self-realisation. He is for others only as a by-product of his being for himself. Dostoevsky saw that this makes man radically guilty and that he cannot pass sentence on himself, but it was the Scottish theologians, Edward Irving, Thomas Erskine and McLeod Campbell who saw that it is only in Christ's vicarious repentance that man can judge himself and repent. In contrast to existentialist theology, Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics gives a comprehensive account of what conversion in Christ means, but the formal accuracy of his work needs to be enriched with the insights of these Scottish theologians.

Barth holds that God elects man in and with Himself, i.e., in Christ. Because God is for His enemies with the same ultimate seriousness as He is for Himself, loving them as Himself, He can rescue them from the abyss of their self-isolation. Barth, however, fails fully to develop this liberating doctrine. He gives adequate recognition neither to the origin of election in the Father's will to create sons through His giving of His only Son, nor to the obedient electing work of the Spirit in carrying through to the subjectivity of other men Jesus' election of the Father. This slight tendency to Christomonism can be overcome by allowing the Spirit's interaction with the spirit of man to be the goal

of God's self-giving on earth.

Again, although in his Christology Barth attempts to break through all impersonal notions of Christ's bringing others to share in Himself, he falls short of showing that Christ's loving His enemies as Himself consisted of the sorrow of His heart over them. His failure fully to allow the Spirit to be equal God with the Son leads him to undervalue the victory Christ wrought over sin in our flesh by the Spirit, and this deprives his Christology of an adequate basis for a complete account of Christ's communication of His conversion to sinners. The failure fully to regard Pentecost as the goal of the divine economy on earth leads to a tendency to regard men as turned to God in their being prior to their active participation by the Spirit in Christ, and so to a constriction of his own profound insight into man's free turning to God as his correspondence to God's free turning to him. He thinks of man as already given to God apart from his own personal act and so robs God's grace of its goal of bringing men to turn to God with a freedom analogous to God's turning to them. Similarly, Barth's failure to allow the Spirit His full creative role with the Son leads to a circumscribed account both of the content of man's participation in Christ's repentance and also of his recreation by the Spirit in faith. He speaks of man's small conversion rather than of Christ giving him all that is His through His Spirit. An element of impersonality enters his account of Christ's calling sinners to Himself, since for him they are His apart from their response to His supremely

courteous appeal to them. Barth's fragment on baptism goes a long way toward developing a doctrine of the Spirit as called for in this study but His creative work in baptising men into Christ's vicarious humanity is still not fully recognised.

## PREFACE

This study has its origin in the conviction that man is faced with an either/or: either he accepts the truth about himself and despairs, or he hides from himself and lives in illusion. The only way out is for him to turn from himself and to turn to God. Pascal's description of the complete contrast between man without God and man with God is thoroughly convincing.

But how are we to turn to God? In their different ways both existentialist theology and evangelical preaching so stress man's decision that he is thrown back on to the very self from which he seeks release. Into this situation, Karl Barth's teaching in his Church Dogmatics shines with liberating power: Christ has turned to God in our humanity and gives us a share in His response.

Yet the reader of the Dogmatics finds himself frustrated. Barth's intellectual precision, his wisdom and his love for the Lord of whom he writes opens up a vision of God's love for man so deep and wide that he cannot rest until his message has been heard by the world which has isolated itself from God. There is a tendency for Barth to weaken the evangelical thrust of his doctrine by not allowing the conversion of man in Christ fully to reach the men who are its object. It was with this problem in mind that the evangelical message of the Scottish theologians, Edward Irving, Thomas Erskine and McLeod Campbell became surprisingly relevant. Their insights into the unconditional freeness of the gospel, and especially into the Spirit in Christ's

vicarious humanity seemed to offer a way of strengthening Barth's theology and mobilising it for evangelism. It is my hope that this study goes some way toward bringing these insights to bear on Barth in such a way that the message of God's unbounded love for man can be heard by the men who so desperately need it.



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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM OF TURNING TO GOD AS IT EMERGES IN THE POST- ENLIGHTENMENT CULTURAL SITUATION

Turning to God is something which man does. If it is true that the Lord turns sinners to Himself it is also true that man turns himself to God.<sup>1</sup> This is the case for a reason Karl Barth never tires of elucidating. True God in His freedom has become true man, and therefore His freedom is the basis of man's freedom. God's turning to man does not cancel out man's turning to Him but establishes it.

The Church has been slow to enter into the riches and glory of this subjective aspect of conversion. Yet, if it is true that man is the object of God's love, the Church need not feel embarrassed or ashamed of man's act in conversion. On the contrary, since God's love aims at this act of man, the Church robs God of His glory if it fails to rejoice in the riches of man's subjectivity as opened up for him in Christ.

It will be argued in this chapter that Christian theology

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1. Cf. Lamentations 5: 21. 'O Lord, turn us back to thyself and we shall come back' (N.E.B.). The verb in the Hebrew in both cases is shub. God's act of turning is the ground of man's act and for that very reason makes it possible and guarantees it. The Reformers were very conscious of God's act as the basis of man's; see, e.g., the Commination Service in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. One of the concluding prayers (to be said by all the people) opens with the petition: 'Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so we shall be turned.' For the Reformers, sinners could be saved only if they repented and turned to God, but they were equally certain that sinners could do this only on the basis and in the strength of God's prior turning to them. Indeed, they went further and saw that, as men turn to God, God Himself is at work turning them to Himself.



has only gradually come to appreciate the subjective aspect of conversion, and that it was not until the protestant reformation that a profound understanding of it was reached. According to the Reformers, man discovered his true subjectivity by faith in Christ. This understanding was, unfortunately, quickly lost, and although very important advances were made in the understanding of man's subjectivity, these advances inevitably led to self-alienation. This was because faith was rejected in favour of immediate self-knowledge. Man would trust nothing outside himself, nothing 'alien' to himself. In thus basing himself on himself man inevitably rejected the concrete otherness of other people and therefore became guilty of using others merely as a means toward self-realisation.

Post-Enlightenment man therefore needs a new starting point for his venture in life. This new starting point cannot be simply a return to the reformation, but will need to be a deepened understanding of faith in Christ, an understanding which includes the enriched modern insight into man's subjectivity. It will be argued that certain Scottish theologians, who gained penetrating insight into Christ's sinless humanity, are of great help in this task. They witnessed to Christ's righteous humanity as His tried and proved compassion for sinners. His humanity is thus the new basis for man. In Him, the repentance for sin which the sinner cannot make is perfected, and sinners find the freedom to turn to God as they accept His Spirit and participate in Him.

This chapter will conclude with an introductory account of Karl Barth's engagement with the modern problem of conversion.

The discussion which follows deliberately looks not only to the work of theologians, but also to poets and novelists. This is felt to be important, since the Enlightenment rejected Christian theology. It is hoped that the breakdown of the Enlightenment venture can be illustrated effectively by looking at the work of men who shaped their thinking in terms of experience rather than of doctrine. Barth's great book on nineteenth century theology<sup>1</sup> is not explicitly discussed, though it is always in the background. This has been done in order to make an independent assessment of the achievement of the Romantic Enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> Besides, Barth's book is concerned almost exclusively with German thought and yet it was not in Germany but in Scotland that perhaps the most important idea for the

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1. K. Barth, Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century, trans. J. Bowden (S.C.M., London, 1972).
  2. The title, 'Romantic Enlightenment', is taken from G. Clive, The Romantic Enlightenment (Meridian, New York, 1960), and is intended to refer to the development of Enlightenment thought during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially as it integrated into itself the Romantic awareness of man's personal subjectivity. Clive argues that the Western mind during this period, though ostensibly characterised by unbounded confidence in man's freedom to develop and even to create himself, was in fact caught in ambiguity and paradox and that it could only frustrate itself. His book is a study in the breakdown of the very principles on which man based his confidence. Clive's assessment is more 'tragic' than Barth's, as he points out in his essay on Mozart (pp. 39-65), but although the Romantic Enlightenment was more aware of its breakdown than Barth indicates, Clive's idea that the very energy with which its despair was perceived was to some extent redemptive only indicates the truth of Barth's point that modern man is unable to judge himself to be the failure that he is.

doctrine of repentance, that of Christ's repentance, emerged.

### The Development of the Understanding of Man's Subjectivity

According to a saying of Jesus recorded in the fourth Gospel, the angels both ascended and descended on the Son of man.<sup>1</sup> Whatever else this saying may mean, it at least indicates that Christianity includes a twofold movement, both upwards and downwards, between God and man.

It is, however, broadly true to say that the early Church concentrated most of its doctrinal energies on winning a clear account of only the downward movement from God to man. In their refinement of the doctrines of Trinity and incarnation, the early Fathers showed that God became man for us men and for our salvation, yet (with some notable exceptions)<sup>2</sup> they did not succeed in bringing 'us men and our salvation' into equally clear focus. This task was taken up by the Western Church. Augustine's Confessions broke new ground with its intensely personal exploration of the upward movement of man toward God.

We know enough of the theology of the Dark Ages to know that while it preserved much of the objectivity of the Fathers it did concern itself with the victory of men.

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1. 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.' Jn. 1: 51.
  2. Especially Irenaeus and Athanasius. See E. Brunner, The Mediator, trans. O. Wyon (Lutterworth, London, 1934), pp. 524f. Brunner draws attention to the saying of Irenaeus: 'Jesus Christ, in His infinite love has become what we are, in order that He may make us entirely what He is.'

Though it conceived the relationship between God and man in epic terms, at its best its very objectivity freed it to see man as the object of Christ's victory and so also to see the personal human subject fighting a triumphant battle against evil. At few times in the Church's history has justification so clearly meant that men are more than conquerors through Christ:

Christ hath our host surrounded  
 With clouds of martyrs bright,  
 Who wave their palms in triumph  
 And fire us for the fight:  
 For Christ the cross ascended  
 To save a world undone,  
 And, suffering for the sinful,  
 Our full redemption won. 1

Precisely because this hymn looks to Jesus it is free to celebrate the victorious march of 'our host', of us men.

It was not until the twelfth century renaissance that man became the unashamed focal point of theology.<sup>2</sup> Bernard, writing on the love of God, described the movement of man from unregenerate self-love through to love of himself only for God's sake.<sup>3</sup> Bernard always thought of man as the object of God's love, and the humanity of Jesus was the heart-beat of his theology. For him, to concentrate on the human side of the fellowship with God did not mean to retreat into introspection but to press forward into the

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1. Columba, Christus Redemptor genitum, trans. D. MacGregor, in The Church Hymnary, Third Edition (Oxford University Press, London, 1973), Hymn 301, verse 2.
  2. R.W. Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages (Hutchinson, London, 1953), see chapter 5, 'From Epic to Romance'.
  3. Bernard of Clairvaux, On Loving God, ed. H. Martin (S.C.M., London, 1959), see especially chapter 15.



riches of God's love for man. Yet even at its best twelfth century theology never attained the maturity of Columba's understanding of the correspondence between God and man, between the objective and the subjective. A terrible imbalance invaded much of its theology. Abelard was driven by a passionate desire for justification, as both his autobiography<sup>1</sup> and his doctrinal works show, but the reader is left asking whether he was not speaking of a kind of self-justification. Because, unlike Bernard, he did not see that God's love unequivocally preceded and surrounded every act of his, the subjective degenerated into the introspective and prevailed to such a degree that the objective was all but crowded out. Inevitably Abelard began asking what act of man's (what contrition, what love, what imitation of Jesus) could secure justification.<sup>2</sup> He wished to intensify his awareness of God, but, because he did not allow the prior, objective love of God to undergird his search, the heightened subjectivity for which he strove turned in on itself and became a mixture of self-justification and frustrated anger.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Like Augustine, Abelard was particularly interested in the personal 'I', but where Augustine thought of himself as encompassed by the mercy of God, Abelard thought of his life as a constant defence against adversity.
  2. Abelard believed that justification is by faith (J.G.Sikes, Peter Abailard (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1932), p.211), but he also believed that Christ inspired 'a new motive into our actions' (p.209) and thus made it possible for men to perform meritorious actions. Under the law men obeyed out of fear and lacked the love for God which could alone make their actions meritorious, but now Christ has inspired men with the hitherto lacking motive of love.
  3. It is amazing that throughout his Historia Calamitatum Abelard remained confident of his essential innocence. The prevenient love of God thus became for him not God's love for us while we are yet sinners but the providence of God by which He trains us to follow the saints in virtue (see the final chapter).

Abelard's failure indicates a fairly general failure in mediaeval theology. Because it said that the sinner, aided by grace, could perform certain acts which would undo his sin and also unite him with Christ, it made man the object of his own action and therefore objectified and alienated the very subjectivity it hoped to intensify.<sup>1</sup> The command to repent was interpreted (following the Vulgate) as 'do penance',<sup>2</sup> and the pious projected their subjectivity into acts intended to give the experience of justification. Acts of identification with Christ, whether of sympathy and imitation with Christ, or of identification with the host on the altar, were also intended to increase fellowship with God. But the very seriousness of intention with which these acts were performed ritualized the consciences they were intended to liberate. It should be noted that theology became self-stultifying in its subjectivity only when it forgot that while men were yet sinners Christ identified Himself with them and died to remove their sin. Immediately God's prior love for the sinner was doubted men were thrown back on themselves and began to search their consciences for ways of justifying their existence.

The protestant reformation broke through this bondage. It proclaimed that Christ has already identified Himself with man and once and for all borne away his sin. Acts of

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1. Cf. K. Kitamori, The Theology of the Pain of God (S.C.M., London, 1966), pp. 82-3. Also G.W.F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind, trans. J.B. Baillie (rev. 2nd ed.; G. Allen and Unwin, London, 1949), 'The Unhappy Consciousness', esp. pp. 257-67.
  2. W. Telfer, The Forgiveness of Sins (S.C.M., London, 1959), p. 104.

penance and identification with Christ are therefore utterly superfluous. The gospel calls men not to do penance but to repent, i.e., to give up their trust in themselves and their works and to trust Christ alone. By this faith they enjoy the riches of fellowship with God which is in Christ. The doctrine of justification by faith did not deny men their act as human subjects in justification, but it did deny them any meritorious role. It thus achieved what mediaeval theology generally failed to achieve, the freedom of the human subject in fellowship with God. As we have seen, the Fathers did not always succeed in bringing into focus the human aspect of fellowship with God, the theology of the Dark Ages cast the subjective into an epic mould and the mediaeval Church, which came closest to gaining the subjective, lost it. But justification by faith alone freed the Christian man to look away from himself to Christ and so to possess fellowship with God in Him: reversing the mediaeval pattern, it lost the subjective in order to gain it.

Since the reformation there have been a number of significant developments in the understanding of man's subjectivity. For convenience, they may be listed in the following four points.

1. By far the most important development has been the distrust of anything exterior to the self as a legitimate starting point for the self's project in the world. Where Anselm's act of radical questioning in his Proslogium confirmed his trust in the God who is other than himself,<sup>1</sup>

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1. Anselm, Proslogium, in Saint Anselm, Basic Writings (Open Court, 1968).



Descartes in his Discourse on Method found himself doubting everything except the immediate experience of his own thinking.<sup>1</sup> Nothing external could be accepted as a ground of certainty. He could trust only what was proper to him, his inalienable knowledge of himself. Hegel carried this kind of thinking through to its logical conclusion. Descartes introduced into his argument the existence of God as the Creator of the self which he experienced, but Hegel assumed nothing. He spoke of the presuppositionless moment in which the self became the sole ground of certainty.<sup>2</sup> One interpreter has put it this way:

1. R. Descartes, Discourse on Method, in Philosophical Writings, trans. and ed. E. Anscombe and P.T. Geach (Nelson, London, 1966), pp. 31ff. But note T.F. Torrance's observation about the extent of Descartes' questioning: 'The questions of the doubter are poised upon himself, upon the self-certainty and proud autonomy of the doubter. Cogito, ergo sum. Dubito, ergo sum. By their very nature they will not allow the doubting self to be called into question.' T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (S.C.M., London, 1965), p. 123.
2. S. Kierkegaard believed that the Hegelians could speak of this presuppositionless moment only by virtue of a prior act of abstraction and reflection, and therefore that it was not presuppositionless at all. 'The System begins with the immediate, and hence without any presuppositions, and hence absolutely....But...how does the System begin with the immediate? That is to say, does it begin with it immediately? The answer to this question must be an unconditional negative. If the System is presumed to come after existence, by which a confusion with an existential system may be occasioned, then the System is of course ex post facto, and so does not begin immediately with the immediacy with which existence began; although in another sense it may be said that existence did not begin with the immediate, since the immediate never is as such, but is transcended as soon as it is. The beginning which begins with the immediate is thus itself reached by means of a process of reflection.' Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. D.F. Swenson (Oxford University Press, London, 1941), pp. 101-2. For Kierkegaard, man can begin with an immanent Absolute only by means of self-deception. The only legitimate starting point is the 'absurd' faith in the Absolute who is wholly Other (Fear and Trembling).

For Hegel, Descartes' discovery of the subjective constituted a new beginning for philosophy....Yet Descartes never fully explained the absolute character of the certitude (ego-cogito-sum) at which he arrived.... Heir to the mediaeval tradition, Descartes still took the ego to be a "creature", and he felt compelled to ground the absoluteness of its certainty by going through what Heidegger calls a "back door", sc. by first proving the existence of a creating God. But was this not effectively to abrogate the declaration of independence with which he had begun?

The most that can be said for the Cartesian achievement is that, having once engaged himself in the search for absolute knowing, Descartes succeeded in discovering the type of presentation which admits of absolute knowing, sc. consciousness of the self....It was left to Hegel to probe the absoluteness of this knowing, the Absolute as such. Heidegger sustains the Hegelian metaphor by saying that, if Descartes sighted new land, Hegel took possession of it.

Taking possession of the new land consists in exploring the absolute character of knowing....Yet how are we to understand the term "absolute"? Heidegger returns to the word's Latin origin (ab-solvere) to give it the radical sense of that which has been "loosened", therefore released from another, whose bonds of dependence upon the other are dis-(sc. ab-)solved. In terms of the Hegelian problematic, from what is "absolute" knowing released? From dependence upon objects in assuring itself of its truth.

(Richardson, Heidegger, pp. 331-2)

It will be argued later in this chapter that this concern for man's self-knowledge as the 'absolute' starting point for his venture in life leads directly to self-alienation. If mediaeval thought sought the subjective and lost it, modern thought has even more terribly alienated itself from what it sought to possess.

2. The second development in the understanding of man's subjectivity is closely connected with the first. There has been a move from conceiving the self in static, substantialist terms toward conceiving it in dynamic, actualist terms.<sup>1</sup> The self is no longer thought of as a kind of

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1. Cf. N. Berdyaev, Freedom and the Spirit, trans. O.F. Clarke (G. Bles, London, 1935), Chapter 1: 'Spirit and Nature'.

spiritual substance, e.g., as a 'soul', but as an activity, a subject which posits itself. The origins of this shift in thought no doubt go back at least as far as the Victorines (esp. Richard), but it emerges with particular confidence in the early Pico della Mirandola. Pico broke with the mediaeval doctrine of the self as fixed by God with a given status in the created order, and claimed that God gave the self the freedom to create its own place in the hierarchy of being according to the level of being it chooses to love.<sup>1</sup> During the Romantic and Idealist movements it became common to think of the self as being constituted as a true self only through its own activity, an activity usually called a movement of the spirit. The poet Coleridge, for example, was particularly concerned to find in man's imaginative powers (as distinguished from mere fancy) a synthesising activity in which man could utter 'I am' in reflection of the divine 'I AM'.<sup>2</sup> Fichte spoke of the self positing itself,

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1. Cf. C. Trinkaus, In Our Image and Likeness (Constable, London, 1970), Vol. 2, p. 506:

'The dignity of man, as is well known, was held by Pico to consist in the condition that man was not created as a fixed part of the structure of the universe, but was given a role by God, after the universe was completed, of viewing it and admiring its Maker. Man was in this view the earthly image of God, and the being that helped the deity maintain the subjectivity of His own being by sharing it to some degree with a creature whose nature was to rise above nature into subjectivity. This subjectivity comprised man's freedom to participate in the universe at whatever level and in whatever condition he chose.'

In his De Ente et Uno, Pico stresses the importance of love in man's participation in being, and it is possible that he is drawing on certain aspects of mediaeval mysticism.

2. S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, Chapter XIII.



Hegel regarded self-awareness as man's greatest possibility, and poets celebrated the power of the 'I' to establish itself in the face of the inanimate world. There can be little doubt that of the many periods in history when men have been conscious of discovering new potentialities for man, the Romantic and Idealist movements were among the most significant.<sup>1</sup>

3. This heightened awareness of man's subjectivity developed the Enlightenment's discovery of man's history as an ongoing process in which man enriches himself.<sup>2</sup> Enlightenment thought located man's essence in his reason, and believed that through reason man could civilise 'rude' nature. Through the proper exercise of reason man could develop both himself and his environment into a harmony which would be a this-worldly realisation of Christianity's alien and other-worldly Kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup> As man's creation it would belong to him. This idea was developed in the nineteenth century. For Hegel, as for the Enlightenment, history was the movement of reason on its way toward its fulfilment, but he deepened this belief by integrating it with the Romantic thesis that this movement is that of man's

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1. The word Romantic is used here to refer not to the Sturm und Drang movement but to the more mature movement in literature which (at least in the figures of Schelling and Coleridge) aligned itself with Idealist philosophy.
  2. G. Vico is generally recognised as being among the first philosophers to argue for a constantly enriching movement in history. See, e.g., G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford University Press, London, 1961), pp.67-8.
  3. Cf. K. Barth's brilliant account of this in Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century, 'Man in the Eighteenth Century'.

subjectivity. Man unfolds his subjectivity in a meaningful history in which nothing is lost and even alienation serves a necessary role in man's self-transcendence and the final all-embracing consummation. Man's subjectivity assumed eschatological dimensions.<sup>1</sup> It was the activity in which man realised himself, becoming what he is. In bringing this activity to its fulfilment man completed what he set out to do in his initial self-absolvement from all dependence on others: he entered into possession of all that is other and alien. Having set out by repudiating any alien starting point, he now, at the completion of his task, knew himself as the basis of all things. He had realised himself and he was his own, subject to no other and no alienation. He had thus justified his initial step of taking himself, and not an 'alien' God, as the ground of his project in life.

4. This combination of subjectivity and eschatology inevitably fell into three moments or phases. First, there was the presupposition of the entire movement, i.e., the apparently self-evident idea that man can and should sever himself from every external object and make himself the ground of his own certainty. This corresponds to point 1. Second, there was the experience of alienation which followed this fundamental self-positing. Together with this

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1. Bultmann has drawn attention to this in his History and Eschatology (University Press, Edinburgh, 1957), e.g., '...the subject of /man's/ ever new decisions is the same, namely the I, an ever-growing and becoming, an ever-increasing, improving or degenerating I.' (p. 146).



experience of alienation there arose what might be called the duty of overcoming alienation and thus of justifying the original repudiation of alienation. This called for the activity of the self, for the realisation of subjectivity, and corresponds to point 2. Third, with varying degrees of hope and confidence, there was the projection of the final goal, the homecoming, the return of the self to the self. This return would not be a return to the original starting point, but a development and enrichment of it.<sup>1</sup> By means of its active engagement with alienation it would be self-fulfilled, self-possessed. This corresponds to point 3. The account of this three-fold movement could and did take many forms, but the significant point for this study is that it gives every appearance of being a possible and even necessary translation into inalienable human terms of traditional, other-worldly Christianity. It translated the traditional pilgrimage from lost innocence through repentance toward eternal righteousness into the apparently richer and more daring journey from original innocence through alienation toward radical innocence. The word innocence calls for

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1. This idea took countless forms. Beginning with Vico's concept of history as an ascending spiral (i.e., a movement which constantly returns to the same place but always at a higher level of understanding) it may be seen in Hegel's concept of the mind's journey to perfect self-knowledge, in Marx's return to a state of absence of external controls, in Heidegger's 'third phase' with its idea of homecoming (cf. Hegel's Recollection in the Phenomenology of Mind) and in many poets, e.g., T.S.Eliot's:

...the end of all our exploration  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time  
(Little Gidding).

some comment, since it is a theological and poetic word rather than a philosophical one. The idea of innocence was central to the Romantic Enlightenment since it has to do with man's righteousness and therefore with his right to posit and realise himself. For William Blake, who was particularly interested in translating Christianity, man has an original innocence which, by passing through the fires of experience and alienation, is tested, proved and made into radical innocence. It is only on the ground of a belief in such an original innocence that he can justify his creative venture. Similarly in Hegel and even in Marx, it is only on the ground of the legitimacy of man's self-positing that man can justify his project of self-realisation. Only if man is justified in finding his starting point in himself, only if he is innocent, is he justified in proceeding from that point along the path of self-realisation.

In these developments, the idea of conversion is not excluded but given a new meaning. Repentance no longer means a complete about-turn, but involves the giving up of a superficial life for the higher life of the spirit. It involves a renunciation of the immature life of dependence on external objects and the establishment of man's inner, spiritual, subjective powers. Hegel, for example, spoke of man's dread in the face of death and of his need to interiorise his death by means of an act of the spirit.<sup>1</sup>

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1. G.W.F. Hegel, op.cit., pp. 237-8. Cf. J. Hyppolite, Etudes Sur Marx et Hegel (Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, Paris, 1955), p. 38.

Similarly, in the face of the transitoriness of life, poets felt bound to reconstitute their lives on a higher plane by means of the awakening of their creative powers. Wordsworth in his Prelude, perhaps the most ambitious poetic venture of English Romanticism, opened his meditation with a withdrawal from all that is external and contingent and, having attained freedom from all that is not himself, reconstituted himself through the creative imagination.<sup>1</sup> Understood in this sense it could be said that the Romantic Enlightenment understood man's true life as one of continual repentance and faith, i.e., a life in which, by the act of the personal subject, the merely external is negated and transcended for the sake of the immediate life of the spirit. As man

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1. The first three hundred lines of the Prelude describe a kind of askesis in which the mind frees itself from all subjection to external objects, and thus is free to project itself solely on the basis of its inner energies. The great burst of creative energy which follows (lines 301 to the end of Book I) is creative in a double sense. First, the mind does not feed itself on sense objects but only on the images it presents to itself. It sustains itself out of its own resources. Second, the mind recreates its past experiences and in so doing 'recapitulates' itself. The poet makes these past moments his own. As he creates his poem he rescues these experiences from alienation and integrates them into his present identity. In this way he reconstitutes himself through his creative imagination. Later in this chapter it will be argued of Blake that his assertion of innocence was an act of audacity. It is interesting to note that one of the major themes to emerge in the great passages of this part of the Prelude is that of the audacity of man's mind in the world. The 'I' becomes an 'I' only as an intruder, even a 'plunderer' (cf. Nutting) and, unlike the more Christian Coleridge, does not find itself affirmed by the Creator and His creation. There seems to be no equivalent in Wordsworth to the moment in The Ancient Mariner when the self is reconstituted, not by its own activity, but by grace.



exercises this subjectivity he moves from his alienated to his proper life, from inauthentic to authentic existence.

The idea of conversion, however, in the traditional Christian sense, was rejected. According to the orthodox understanding, God questions man as to his righteousness and brings him to realise that he has no innocence but is radically corrupt. In the presence of God, man realises that he cannot base his life on himself but must cry out to God and find in Him a completely new starting point for his life. Conversion is not the transition from an external to an internal starting point, but the turning from oneself to God. For the Romantic Enlightenment, to admit the orthodox understanding would be to abandon the very foundation of man's project in the world, i.e., to abandon his trust only in himself, in what is proper to him. Indeed, for many writers in modern times, the orthodox Christian understanding of God presents man with his most serious threat. He is thought of as an intruder, as a jealous father who would deprive men of all freely human existence.<sup>1</sup> He enters

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1. This fear goes back at least as far as Gnostic theologies, and re-emerged in the Romantic movement. In some of Blake's poems, for example, the idea is developed that, just as one person is jealous of another and attempts to enter his innermost life in order to hurt him, so a jealous god may invade the heart of man and usurp his freedom. In one place Blake speaks of God as the 'selfish Father of men.' We need only point to Wuthering Heights and Tristan and Isolde, to La Belle Dame Sans Merci and the figure of Roger Chillingworth in The Scarlet Letter to realise that nineteenth century culture was troubled by the idea of an alien power entering man's most intimate centre in order to alienate him from himself.

human life only subtly to displace it and to alienate it from itself: He is the Alien who jealously alienates.

These developments in the understanding of man's subjectivity mean that he thinks of himself as his own redeemer. They mean that he posits himself in what he believes is his original innocence, that he labours to radicalise this innocence and finally that he hopes to realise the self-fulfilment in which the initial act of faith in his innocence demonstrates itself to have been justified. He has dared to take himself as the ground of certainty, encouraged himself with the hope of achieving the goal of self-fulfilment and confidently expects to be able to declare the completion of his innocence. To use for a moment the prophet, priest, king structure which the reformation applied to Christ's redeeming work, it may fairly be said that the Romantic Enlightenment begins with an initial act of prophecy which it believes will prove itself to be justified. It begins with the promise, the prophecy, that, by refusing all alien starting points and by attributing innocence to the self-positing 'I', man can realise his self-fulfilment. On the basis of this prophecy man may proceed to the priestly act of putting this innocence to the test and so proving it to be what it claims to be. This priestly act includes both the negative, purifying process which is akin to repentance and the positive, proving process which, as the demonstration of man's innocence under adversity, is akin to works of sanctification. The prophecy is fulfilled in man's entrance into his kingly rights, into the fulfilled self-hood in which he takes full possession of his innocence and in which he has overcome alienation by making

all things his own. He has earned the right to rule the earth. On the ground of his self-proved innocence, he is the messiah who may bring in the millennium.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the initial act of prophecy proves itself justified and declares itself as such.

The contention of this chapter is that the Romantic Enlightenment has completely failed. Man has not succeeded in justifying the rightness of taking himself as his starting point. On the contrary, far from being originally innocent, he is thoroughly corrupt; he actualises his subjectivity in guilty works of jealousy;<sup>2</sup> and far from speaking forth the fulfilled prophecy of his self-proven innocence, he cannot pronounce himself guilty. He is imprisoned in self-alienation. It will be argued that he needs a new starting point for his project in the world. It is the twentieth century theologian, Karl Barth, who has seen most comprehensively that it is in Christ, and in Him alone, that man has this new starting point. For this reason this study will concentrate almost exclusively on his work.

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1. About the same time as Marx was developing his understanding of man's right to bring in the new age, Edward Irving, J.N. Darby and others were preaching the second coming of Christ. For Irving, Jesus was the only man with the right to bring in the millennium because He was the only wholly righteous man. Jesus would rule the earth in righteousness and peace, as the one man in whom God's will for man was realised.
  2. When man takes himself as the centre of his life he inevitably becomes jealous of others since he fears that they are more fulfilled than he is.



In order to argue for this position, the work of William Blake will first be discussed as illustrating, in a particularly powerful way, the Romantic Enlightenment belief in man as his own prophet, priest and king. It is recognised that Blake was a poet and not a theologian or philosopher, yet his work records a very rich exploration of experience and constitutes a serious assertion about the nature of man's project in life. It will then be argued in relation to Hegel's understanding of self-realisation that, despite his own claims, Hegelian man realises himself in what can only be called a kind of sacrifice of the other, and that he is therefore not innocent but guilty. It will next be argued that Nietzsche came close to abandoning himself as the starting point of his thought and even came to the verge of calling out to the absent God. A discussion of Dostoevsky follows in which it is argued that there is in his work an ambivalent recognition of man's total corruption, a recognition compromised by the idea that man in his confession of sin takes responsibility for his guilty, alien self, and so 'redeems' it as his own. Nevertheless it is in his Brothers Karamazov that the perception emerges that man is unable to judge himself as guilty and that, unless he can discover a new ground of innocence, he must either lie about himself or retreat into silence. The chapter will conclude with a brief consideration of the Scottish theologians Edward Irving, Thomas Erskine and McLeod Campbell, showing that they saw in the humanity of Christ a tried and perfected innocence which pronounced judgment on man's guilt where man can only be silent. It will be suggested that

they saw Christ's 'alien' righteousness as so completely given to sinners that they may participate in Him and so share in His repentance. His subjectivity, as truly innocent or righteous subjectivity, establishes their subjectivity. It will be suggested that their work gives the modern theologian a rich basis on which to develop some aspects of Barth's theology. Although Barth has defined man's repentance in Christ comprehensively and accurately, his work lacks some of their insights.

### William Blake

Although William Blake held himself aloof from the cultural life of his times, his purpose seems to have been to set the spiritual venture of his contemporaries on a purified and therefore firmer footing. His scorn for Voltaire and the rationalists sprang mainly from his feeling that they had not penetrated to the heart of man's struggle to give free form to his most basic energies. In poem after poem he celebrated the energies which are proper to man, and directed his most passionate hatred against any priest-craft which would impose an alien structure on them. Man's energy must find the form which is intrinsic to it and which therefore allows it to express and embody itself without external constraint.

Blake understood this struggle for authentic freedom to take place in three not necessarily successive, but connected phases. First, there is untried innocence. This innocence is, second, put to the test in experience, and, third, tried in the fires of experience; it emerges as radical



innocence.<sup>1</sup> It is no longer fragile but has the inflexible resilience which cannot only withstand the onslaught of evil but even redeem it.

Innocence has much in common with prophecy. It means purity and so involves both openness to others and clarity, singleness of vision. The children in his poems of innocence see the needs of others, including those opposed to them, and are able to respond in simple generosity toward them. There is a positive and unhindered relationship between child and nurse, black child and white child, even between chimney sweep and master. In this purity, this simplicity of being oneself, there is even the capacity to bear hardship without retaliation. Through its suffering, innocence can even restore broken relationships:

'Love seeketh not itself to please,  
Nor for itself hath any care,  
But for another gives its ease,  
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.'  
So sang a little Clod of Clay  
Trodden with the cattle's feet,...  
(The Clod and the Pebble)

Thus, the little black boy has a rough life, but the purity of his heart can bring the white boy in joy before their common heavenly Father.<sup>2</sup> In this way innocence holds out

1. This interpretation of Blake, based on The Songs of Innocence and The Songs of Experience, was argued for in a series of unpublished lectures given by Vincent Buckley in the University of Melbourne in 1961. A much abbreviated form of the argument can be found in his Poetry and the Sacred (Chatto and Windus, London, 1968).
2. The little black boy in the poem of that name has both openness to others and clarity of vision. He loves the little white boy who appears to be his opposite and also sees beneath that difference to their common purity in the presence of God. His innocence thus has the prophetic dimension of seeing into the heart of reality and of bringing the world of appearances into harmony with that reality.

the promise of reconciled humanity.

This innocence is put to the test in what Blake termed experience. Instead of suffering for others, the self inflicts sufferings on others, building 'a Hell in Heaven's despite'. The natural energies are blocked and become self-frustrating. In what is one of the most remarkable poems in English he sees 'the mind-forged manacles' victimising innocent people:-

In every cry of every man...  
 The mind-forged manacles I hear.  
 How the chimney-sweeper's cry  
 Every blackening church appalls;  
 And the hapless soldier's sigh  
 Runs in blood down palace walls.  
 But most through midnight streets I hear  
 How the youthful harlot's curse  
 Blasts the newborn infant's tear,  
 And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.  
 (London)

Such clear and concentrated vision is itself the perception of innocence. Only innocence could look so steadily into the centre of this appalling self-victimisation; only singleness of vision could see so clearly this self-contradiction. This innocence not only sees: it also compassionates; it stands alongside the 'newborn infant' and imaginatively identifies with his innocent suffering. It goes further. In this act of imaginative identification, and it must be stressed that this act has nothing to do with fancy but is an act of penetration into the real condition of another, the poet also speaks on behalf of the victim. The poem is a kind of vicarious cry on behalf of the helpless infant. Since this vicarious cry is not easily won, but depends on the poet's generous openness to the child, on his imaginative

identification with it,<sup>1</sup> there is a sense in which the poet suffers for the child. To speak vicariously for the child means hardship for the poet. If this is the case, it must also be said that the poet's innocence, his openness to others and his power to identify with them, is tested, purified and proved. The act of speaking on behalf of suffering purifies the innocence of the speaker. In Blake's synthesis, it is a necessary stage in his qualification to become a prophet.

Before going on to discuss this consummation of innocence, a comment about this 'priestly' work of the poet is needed. In the lines quoted above, the poet does not identify with the evil, victimising energy. The poem is so moving precisely because it identifies with victimised innocence. Yet this is nothing short of audacity. On what grounds may a poet or any one else project himself

1. It must be pointed out that imaginative identification does not mean that the distinction between the poet and the child disappears. If that were to happen, the poet would not be able to suffer on behalf of the child. Compassion, in the sense of feeling for another, would be excluded. Since the poet remains himself he is able to speak on behalf of the child. He is able to do something for the child which the child cannot do for itself. The parallel with Christ's identification with sinners is obvious, especially as interpreted by Edward Irving and McLeod Campbell. According to these theologians, Christ loved men and felt their evil plight as His own, and so did for them what they could not do for themselves. The parallel is, however, no more than formal, since for Blake it is man's innocence which compassionates with others, while for Irving and Campbell man does not have such an innocence and it is solely Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is wholly righteous and able to bear the burden of sinners.







The imagery of fire and gold here connect with the purification of innocence and perhaps indicate a process of purification which increases as the battle progresses. But the apparent humility contained in that thought cannot conceal the unbounded pride of 'O clouds, unfold!', an unmistakeable self-identification with the returning Son of man. Indeed, this stanza thrusts upon the reader the question of the poet's right to arrogate to himself the apocalyptic imagery of the Bible. At no point does he question his worthiness for his messianic task. A sober reading of the poem is compelled to conclude that the poem's massive self-confidence rests only on assertion. Though the poem claims to be an integration of man's basic energies into a unified and liberating act, into an innocence so radical that it is capable of bringing in the rule of man's truest energies, its astonishing pride aligns it rather with destruction and even repression. Although there is talk of 'building' Jerusalem, the poem mentions only the instruments of warfare and is silent concerning the arts of peace.

It has to be said of Blake that he boldly put human innocence where it does not belong. He claimed for that innocence the purity which could see human need and offer itself on behalf of it, thus exercising a kingly, healing power strong enough to convert jealousy into generosity. This would be glorious if it could be located in man as we know him, but even in Blake's own writing it cannot be denied that the opposite of this innocence, jealousy and the will to harm others, occupies the centre of his vision. What is especially disturbing is his view that experience and the

evil that is part of it are a necessary aspect of man's winning through to radical innocence. He could not contemplate Jesus of Nazareth without seeing in Him an impulse to harm others as well as to benefit them.<sup>1</sup> It seems that for Blake it was impossible to conceive of an actually existing human righteousness which steadfastly fulfilled his own vision of having no care for itself but only for the good of others. For this reason, the theological work of Edward Irving, who was coming to the height of his powers at about the time of Blake's death (1827), presents itself as a convincing rejoinder to Blake's failure to locate a human innocence which could prove itself wholly adequate to the human situation. According to Irving, the man Jesus, in our fallen humanity, fulfilled all righteousness. He loved His brethren as Himself. As He fulfilled this righteousness He proved that God's love will go to the very depths of man's depravity.<sup>2</sup> In this act of love, which was far stronger than an act of imaginative identification, He bore the sins of His brethren. He knew their sinful plight as His own. In this demonstration of righteousness, He liberated His brethren, giving them a share in His righteousness. More will be said below about Irving's relevance to this problem of the recovery of man's innocence, but enough has been said at this point to indicate that his work is helpful in the task of locating genuine human innocence.

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1. See his poem on Jesus and also The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

2. E. Irving, The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Human Nature (Baldwin and Cradock, London, 1830), pp. 96-8.

## Hegel

Only one aspect of Hegel's work will be discussed here, that of his conception of man's self-realisation. In the Phenomenology of Mind Hegel argues that the self comes to awareness of itself by means of recognising its likeness in an other self.<sup>1</sup> When this happens there ensues a struggle with the other self, a battle to the death. The self must prove itself and discover in itself the very opposite which it has encountered and fears. Such a movement toward self-completion is not easily won, and, in fact, there is no way to it except through a highway of despair. The self must internalise its own finitude and death. It is also a struggle with the other self in which the self internalises the death which the other self means to it. Having won through this painful battle, the self has proved that it is not merely in itself, like the rest of the world, but that it is for itself. It is genuinely human, genuinely its own.

For Hegel, men 'prove themselves and each other through a life and death struggle.' In a moving passage he says:

They must enter into this struggle, for they must bring their certainty of themselves, the certainty of being for themselves, to the level of objective truth, and make this a fact both in the case of the other and in their own case as well. And it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence, is not the immediate form in which it first makes

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1. The following account is drawn from G.W.F. Hegel, op.cit., esp. pp. 229-40. Also, J. Hyppolite, op.cit., pp. 31-41; and J. Wahl, Le Malheur de la Conscience dans le Philosophie de Hegel (Presses Universit  s de France, Paris, 1951).



its appearance, is not its mere absorption in the expanse of life. Rather it is thereby guaranteed that there is nothing present but what might be taken as a vanishing moment - that self-consciousness is merely pure self-existence, being for itself. The individual who has not staked his life, may, no doubt, be recognised as a Person; but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness. In the same way each must aim at the death of the other, as it risks its own life thereby; for that other is to it of no more worth than itself; the other's reality to the former as an external other, as outside itself; it must cancel that externality. The other is purely existent consciousness and entangled in manifold ways; it must view its otherness as pure existence for itself or as absolute negation. (Phenomenology of Mind, pp. 232-3)

This passage has been quoted at some length in order to illustrate the impression which many passages of the Phenomenology give that, despite Hegel's conviction that this 'trial by death' is both necessary and good, the one self uses the other self as a means towards self-realisation. Even if it is pointed out that Hegel insists that the two selves engaged in this struggle come to self-realisation, it still seems that each self uses the other. At the very least it must be said that in Hegel the other self is not an unambiguous good: it is needed, not for its own sake, but for one's own self-realisation. Selves do not encounter each other in free, mutual love and affirmation. The other self is needed, not loved. The two selves do not affirm each other but confront each other, seeing in the other the necessary means to self-awareness. Even in the final self-completion it does not happen that each affirms the otherness of the other, but that each includes the other in its awareness. Yet if the self includes the other in itself, what content can be given the concrete otherness of the other self?

In Hegel there is something very close to an antithesis



of the Pauline saying: 'the man who loves his wife loves himself.' (Eph. 5: 28). According to Paul, in the order of reconciliation, the self confronts the other in love (agapē) and affirms itself only as it affirms the concrete otherness of the other, even the body of the other. Paul compares the self's love for the other with Christ's love for His body, the Church, i.e., a love which gives itself even to death for the sake of the other (ho Christos ēgapēsen tēn ekklēsiān kai paredōken heauton hyper autēs) (Eph. 5: 25).

In Hegel the self goes through an internalised death in relation to the other, but this death takes place not for the sake of the other but for its own sake. The concrete otherness of the other is disposed of. Even the exalted talk of the self's self-sacrifice, as described in the Philosophy of Religion,<sup>1</sup> only confirms the suspicion that something quite selfish is going on here, since the purpose of this self-sacrifice is not the benefit of the other but gain for oneself.

It is important to see this complete contrast between Hegel and Christianity, because at first glance it seems that Hegel has grasped Christianity's understanding of the

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1. G.W.F. Hegel, Philosophy of Religion, Vol. III, trans. E.B. Spiers and J.B. Sanderson (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., London, 1895), p. 95. Speaking of man's appropriation of Christ's sacrifice, he says: 'When man accomplishes within himself this conversion and yielding up of the natural will, and lives in love, this represents the essential fact, the thing in-and-for-itself. His subjective certainty, his feeling, is truth, it is the truth and the nature of Spirit.' See also, J. Wahl, op.cit., pp. 76ff.

transforming power of sacrifice. Sacrifice plays an important role not only in his discussion of religion, but also, in a slightly different form, in the Phenomenology, with its talk of the highway of despair and the perilous journey through the self's feeling incommensurate with its desires. At almost every point Hegel speaks of death and renewal, of the product of the dialectic, i.e., of sacrifice and its issue. Like many nineteenth century Idealists, Hegel found Christianity intelligible and acceptable as the religion which transformed the external sacrifice of animals into the sacrifice of the self. For them, Christianity was a kind of unbloody sacrifice in which finite self-knowledge was abandoned for the sake of the higher knowledge of the spirit. It took up the best insights of the Old Testament (e.g., 'thou delightest not in sacrifice [nor in] burnt offering.' (Ps. 51 :16).) and 'spiritualised' them.<sup>1</sup> The external sacrifice was abolished in favour of the sacrifice of the finite life and the affirmation of the truly spiritual life. This, it seemed, was repentance, conversion and enlightenment. It took a figure the stature of Kierkegaard to show that this is very different from Christian faith. In Fear and Trembling he asked whether the significance of the story of the sacrifice of Isaac was not that God calls for obedience in spite of, and not because of, the ethical ends which may be achieved by it. Does not God call for the utterly offensive

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1. There is an interesting discussion of this in T. Mann, Dr. Faustus, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter (Penguin, 1968), pp. 272f.

obedience in which man is required to sacrifice what is dearer to himself than his own life, even although no good, let alone self-transcendence, can be seen to follow from it? In Hegel, the self sacrifices its finitude in the knowledge that it will gain by that action a higher life, but in the Abraham story, the self gives up its attachment to finitude without the knowledge of any benefit to itself. In Hegel, after the self has been through its internalised death it affirms itself as the ground of all things. In Kierkegaard, also, the self which has lost all regains all, but in an entirely different sense.<sup>1</sup> For him, the self has truly lost all things because God has taken them, and it is truly given all things, because God returns what He took. Hegel and Kierkegaard thus speak of two entirely different kinds of 'conversion'. Both understand that for conversion to be conversion there must be death and rebirth: for Hegel this death and rebirth is the ultimate testing of the self, even to death, in order that it may realise its potentialities; but for Kierkegaard this death and rebirth is God's bringing the self to a complete end so that, as by a miracle analogous to the creatio ex nihilo of the first creation, He gives the self forgiveness and new life.

It was Nietzsche who, in the nineteenth century, saw most clearly the anti-Christian dimension of the Hegelian account of man's self-realisation. As T.W. Adorno and others

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1. W. Lowrie holds this to be the meaning of Kierkegaard's concept of 'Repetition', Kierkegaard (Oxford University Press, London, 1938), p. 630.



have pointed out, Nietzsche realised that there can be no satisfactory sublimation of the fight to the death between the self and its other.<sup>1</sup> In Thus Spoke Zarathustra it seems that either the self must die or the supreme Other, God, must be killed. It will always be a matter of debate as to how far in Thus Spoke Zarathustra and Genealogy of Morals Nietzsche was thinking of Hegel, but there can be little doubt that he was pleading that the Idealist conception of the self and its other be called by its proper name, i.e., that of jealousy, lust and hunger for the other. He was calling for a 'demythologisation' of Idealist concepts, and asking that it be recognised that there is murder in the life and death struggle by which men try and prove themselves to be men. Instead of speaking of civilisation we should speak of the cunning of the fox and the jungle of animal instincts in which each hungers for the life of the other.

The constantly reiterated presupposition of Thus Spoke Zarathustra is the death of God. It is men who have killed Him in order to assert their own self-overcoming, their own self-transcendence as Übermenschen. Intoxicating though this assertion of will to power is, it brings in its wake an intolerable loneliness in which man is tempted to cry out to the absent God. Guilty and utterly lonely, he cries out for the absent God to return. But this God wills to love and

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1. T.W. Adorno, Negative Dialectic, trans. E.B. Ashton (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973), pp. 23ff: 'Idealism as Rage'. Also M. Greene, 'Hegel's "Unhappy Consciousness" and Nietzsche's "Slave Morality"', in Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion, ed. E. Christensen (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1970), pp. 125-41. Greene draws attention to the difference between Hegel and Nietzsche.



even although men have 'murdered' Him. He remains steadfastly God. He does not abdicate His absolute love. This means that He wills to possess the self who cries to Him. The self must therefore either capitulate to God, tortured by His presence, or remain unbearably lonely, tortured by His absence!

In Book IV the sorcerer cries out to the unknown God:

Ha ha!

Me - you want me?

Me - all of me?...

Ha ha!

And you torment me, fool that you are,  
You rack my pride?

Offer me love - who still warms me?

Who still loves me? - offer me hot hands!

Offer me coal-warmers for the heart,

Offer me, the most solitary,

Whom ice, alas! sevenfold ice

Has taught to long for enemies,

For enemies themselves,

Offer, yes yield to me,

Cruellest enemy -

Yourself!

He is gone!

He himself has fled,

My last sole companion,

My great enemy,

My unknown,

My hangman-god!

No! Come back,

With all your torments!

Oh come back to the last of all solitaries!

To the last of all solitaries!

All the streams of my tears

Run their course to you!

And the last flame of my heart -

It burns up to you!

Oh come back,

My unknown God! My pain! My last - happiness!

(Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pp. 266-7)

Nietzsche, however, regarded such calling on God as temptation.<sup>1</sup> He refused the possibility of allowing God to

1. F. Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, trans. and ed.

R.J. Hollingdale (Penguin, 1969), p. 270; cf. pp. 275-9.

master the solitary self. Without God, he was compelled to remythologise man's striving for self-realisation, and in Thus Spoke Zarathustra the myth of eternal recurrence emerges. The self cannot be satisfied with anything less than eternity. It must love life so intensely that it wills its experience to return eternally. This strange and even bizarre idea can be regarded as the extreme development of Hegelian self-realisation. Hegel's saying that 'it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained'<sup>1</sup> becomes Nietzsche's 'live dangerously';<sup>2</sup> Hegel's self-transcendence becomes Nietzsche's ecstatic, dionysiac overcoming of man; and Hegel's absolute knowledge, with its Recollection in which all experience is conserved,<sup>3</sup> becomes eternal recurrence. Although Nietzsche did not trace his conception of the Übermensch back to Hegel, it is difficult not to see in it a radicalised assertion of Hegel's tamer idea of self-realisation. What is more important, however, is Nietzsche's recognition of his Übermensch as the negation of Christ. For him, the logic of the nineteenth century led inescapably to direct and open opposition to the man from Nazareth. Hegel's disciplined road to absolute knowledge becomes the most difficult and testing task of all, that of self-overcoming, self-mastery - and what is this but the sublimated will to power which is the contrary of Jesus'

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1. See the quotation from Hegel above, pp. 28-9.

2. Quoted in F. Nietzsche, op.cit., p. 18.

3. G.W.F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Mind, pp. 807-8.

gracious humility?<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche thought of this self-overcoming as supreme joy, as the supreme victory of the will to power, but one is compelled to ask is it not rather a supreme form of contempt for others. Is it not the negation of love for one's neighbour, and thus is it not a supreme form of solitariness? Zarathustra says:

I tell you: Your love of your neighbour is your bad love of yourselves.  
 You flee to your neighbour away from yourselves and would like to make a virtue of it: but I see through your 'selflessness'.  
 The 'You' is older than the 'I'; the 'You' has been consecrated but not yet the 'I': so man crowds towards his neighbour.  
 Do I exhort you to love of your neighbour? I exhort you rather to flight from your neighbour (Nächsten) and to love of the most distant (Fernsten).  
 Higher than love of one's neighbour stands love of the most distant man and of the man of the future; higher still than love of man I account love of causes and of phantoms. (Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pp. 86-7)

In such an ethic the concrete otherness of other selves is deliberately negated, and, if this is the case, what can it be called but aggression toward others? Nietzsche did not regard this ethic as productive of guilt, yet the eternal recurrence which is its purpose and goal bears a remarkable resemblance to Dante's vision of damnation. For both Nietzsche's eternal recurrence and Dante's hell depend on man's refusal to repent, on his will to be himself and to love the self he has made himself to be.

However this may be, certain contemporaries of Nietzsche believed that repentance, radical and complete,

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1. On the relationship between Nietzsche's eternal recurrence and Lutheran Pietism, see the interesting (if somewhat simplified) account in R.J. Hollingdale's introduction to F. Nietzsche, op.cit., pp. 28f.

was the only course open to nineteenth century thought. Of these, the most important for the subject of this study is Dostoevsky. A brief discussion of his work now follows.

### Dostoevsky

It is well known that in Crime and Punishment Dostoevsky was attempting to demonstrate the anti-humanity, the guiltiness of the idea of the great man as it emerges in Hegel and in Nietzsche. Dostoevsky saw nothing less than murder in their concepts of self-realisation. For him, man's salvation could come only through repentance and through Christ.

The central figure of Crime and Punishment, Raskolnikov, is a proud, insecure young man with a passion for justice. He becomes convinced that his landlady, who is an utterly selfish and unfeeling moneylender, deserves to die. In order to kill her, he has to overcome all the objections of his conscience, but he finally succeeds, telling himself that it is the duty he owes to justice. But once the deed is done, he is pursued by dread. The novel becomes a kind of detective story in which the hero is his own detective, pursuing himself to discover who he is. Eventually Raskolnikov goes to the police and confesses to his act, thus acknowledging himself to be the person that he is. He is sentenced to Siberia and there he learns to accept the New Testament. His conscience is re-awakened, he repents and accepts Christ.

Another interpretation of Raskolnikov's life is, however, possible. It can be seen even more convincingly as



his struggle with himself, the struggle in which, far from coming to repentance, he takes full responsibility for the deed which previously had seemed too alien to be his. His life follows the three phases noted above in nineteenth century self-realisation. First, he posits himself as rational, superior man. He believes himself to be a man with a deeper penetration into the nature of justice than others. He then acts as if he is this man, doing what is needed to prove himself to be this superior man. Both in the 'courage' he musters to kill the landlady and in the almost unbearable anguish which closes in on him afterwards, he puts himself to the test. Finally, when he kisses the ground and freely goes to the police, he takes responsibility for the self which killed the old woman. He acknowledges who he is, making public his hitherto hidden self. This is not repentance. Indeed it is the opposite, since it is the affirmation and acceptance of the self which in repentance is judged and hated.<sup>1</sup> Raskolnikov even doubts that he has done wrong. Nowhere in the novel does he become convinced that the old hag that he killed was as truly a human being as he. Despite the Epilogue, in which it is hinted that a new life begins for Raskolnikov, it is clear that Dostoevsky is unable to portray what is involved in repentance. He is unable to show that Raskolnikov is unambiguously guilty for taking the life of the 'worthless' miser of a landlady, and

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1. Even when Sonia convinces him that he should confess his deed to the police, he says: 'I shall not accuse myself.' Crime and Punishment, trans. C. Garnett (J.M. Dent, London, 1911), p. 351.

thus that the self which killed her must die. As the novel stands, the old woman is valued only as a step in the path of Raskolnikov's self-realisation. She has the function of his 'other'. He needs her to prove himself. In a real sense she is the person whom he dreads to become but who, for that reason, presents him with an essential aspect of himself. He recognises himself in the old hag - why otherwise would he want to negate and overcome her? In the long struggle he has to find the 'daring'<sup>1</sup> to kill her, he redeems himself from the fear that he is merely mediocre, a superfluous parasite like the old woman. He redeems himself therefore through violence, through violating his own conscience, i.e., at the cost of sacrificing an other life, an other life like his own. Yet Dostoevsky underplays the sheer horror of this. He indicates it in the incident in which Raskolnikov kills innocent Lizaveta, the old woman's retarded sister, but Raskolnikov never becomes seriously concerned about this. More important, he does not show the old woman's value as a person (even if a thoroughly corrupt one) in the presence of God. Because he fails to do this, he also fails to give the ground for true repentance, i.e., the repentance in which the self which killed the old money-lender must die.

In confirmation of this interpretation of Dostoevsky it may be added that for him Christianity taught redemption through suffering. Suffering is central to Crime and Punishment. Porfiry speaks of the strange modern disease

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1. ibid., p. 349.

in which men desire suffering.<sup>1</sup> It can easily be argued that Raskolnikov committed his act of violence, violence both against others and himself, in order to bring upon himself that suffering in which he could put himself to the test and prove himself.

Yet over and against this interpretation it must be asked whether Sonia, Raskolnikov's friend who willingly gives herself for others, does not open up the meaning of Christian repentance. Sonia presents Raskolnikov with the only reality which can bring him to see the irreplaceable value of the old woman and so to see that he has done wrong in killing her. Sonia lives in God's presence and so awakens him to the One who alone gives the old hag value. With Sonia, Raskolnikov comes closest to repentance. She embodies agapē and imitates Christ's giving Himself for the oppressed. Faced with her compassion, Raskolnikov's pride is shown up for what it is.<sup>2</sup> Agapē alone is strong enough to penetrate him, and, in a moving scene just before he confesses to the police, he comes to the verge of the tears of joy in repentance. Agapē can do this because it alone loves without seeking itself in the other,<sup>3</sup> without seeking to use the other. Whereas society consists of a vicious network of selves using each other,<sup>4</sup> Sonia goes out in order to be

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1. ibid., p. 380.

2. See the great Chapter 4 of Part V, in which Sonia brings Raskolnikov to see himself in a new way.

3. Cf. Barth's description of agapē (in God) as that which does not seek itself in the other but genuinely seeks the other, C.D. IV/2, p. 750.

4. As represented in, e.g., Svidrigailov, Looshin.

'used' for the good of those who victimise her. She has no mask, no pretensions: she loves others for their own sake and gives herself for them. Thus, Sonia and Raskolnikov confront each other as the embodiment of antithetical principles: she is resolved to be hurt, 'sacrificed' for the good of others; he is resolved to hurt, to sacrifice others for his own self-realisation. Sonia is much stronger than Raskolnikov (though it is doubtful that Dostoevsky succeeded in giving this dramatic realisation): her love pursued him. If he hunted the old moneylender, he was himself hunted by love even as he did so: for in thus seeking to realise himself, God was seeking to find him and was pursuing him to the point where he must acknowledge himself to be utterly guilty and must give himself up into His hands. Through Sonia's love, God's love, agapē was calling him to accept the cross.<sup>1</sup>

Even when Dostoevsky's picture of Sonia's love, and the possibility of repentance which it opens up for Raskolnikov, has been praised, a severe problem remains. Dostoevsky gives a somewhat idealised dramatisation of Sonia. It is not that she is too good to be true (in Christ there is no limit to human goodness) but that Dostoevsky does not define her relationship with Christ. It is not perfectly clear that her goodness comes from Christ alone, and there is a tendency to elide her with Christ. Her suffering tends to replace that of Christ. True, Sonia's suffering takes place in Christ, but the distinction between what she

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1. Dostoevsky, op.cit., p. 353. But does the cross here symbolise the cross of Christ or the cross of punishment and expiation?



is in herself and what she is in Christ is blurred. This is a very serious criticism, since, unless Sonia in herself shares Raskolnikov's corruption, unless in herself she partakes of the common human guilt, she is of a different order of humanity and cannot offer Raskolnikov the Christ who redeems sinners out of their guilty humanity. Thus, at a crucial moment in Raskolnikov's life, she offers him not Christ but the cross of suffering and atonement: 'You must make atonement so that you may be redeemed thereby!'<sup>1</sup> Human suffering and Christ become identified, or, at least, men participate in Christ through suffering. Insofar as this happens in Dostoevsky sinful man finds within his sinful existence the capacity for redemption, and to this extent repentance means not a turning from man in himself to the Christ who is other than him but a bearing of the suffering of one's own actions. To this extent man becomes the one who makes atonement for himself, redeeming his sinful existence: to this extent repentance is self-redemption.

This problem arises in an equally acute form in The Brothers Karamazov. Father Zossima says:-

If the evil doing of men moves you to indignation and overwhelming distress, even to a desire for vengeance on the evil doers, shun above all that feeling. Go at once and seek suffering for yourself, as though you were yourself guilty of that wrong. (Brothers Karamazov, p. 335)

This counsel goes right to the heart of the gospel.

Jesus Himself bore the sins of all men, accusing Himself of their sins as though He Himself were guilty of their wrong.

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1. ibid., p. 351.

Also, Jesus taught His followers: 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you....Judge not, and you will not be judged;...forgive and you will be forgiven.' (Lk. 6: 27, 37-8). Yet Dostoevsky does not make it sufficiently clear that Christ alone has borne the sin of the world, and that those in Christ therefore do not bear sins, not even the sins of others. As in Crime and Punishment, the Christians do not give a clear witness to Christ and there is a tendency for their sufferings to take His place and to become redemptive. One of the reasons that Ivan Karamazov never attains repentance must surely be that Zossima and Alyosha do not point away from themselves to Christ with sufficient clarity for Ivan to realise that he can be delivered from his guilt only in Christ, only as his life is placed on a radically new basis.

In Dostoevsky, then, the need for repentance is recognised but not really experienced. He has great difficulty in describing the transition from the life based on self to the life based on God. Even so, Father Zossima does witness to this transition when he says:

I predict that at the very moment when you realise with horror that, far from getting nearer your goal, you are, in spite of all your efforts, actually getting further from it than ever,...you will suddenly attain your goal and behold clearly the miraculous power of the Lord who all the time has been loving and guiding you.

(Brothers Karamazov, Magarshak translation, p. 64)

Sadly, the woman who receives this wisdom never reaches conversion. Though Zossima's words indicate that man has no basis of conversion in himself (on the contrary, man's efforts at love only alienate him further from it) Dostoevsky

failed adequately to point to Christ as the One who enters into man as the basis on which he may turn to God.

There is, however, powerful evidence in The Brothers Karamazov of this need for a basis for repentance outside sinful man. In the figure of Ivan Karamazov Dostoevsky shows that man is entirely corrupt, that he has no innocence, and therefore that he is unable to judge himself to be the unjust man he is. Though this is negative evidence, in that it goes no further than demonstrating the disqualification of sinful man to make even the first step in repentance, it is powerful evidence and is a kind of mute cry for participation in Christ's repentance. A brief consideration of some aspects of the novel will show what is at stake here.

The central event in The Brothers Karamazov is the murder of wicked old father Karamazov, and the novel is concerned to discover who is guilty for his death.<sup>1</sup> Although the eldest son, Mitya, is accused of the crime and finally convicted of it, the second son, Ivan, becomes convinced that he is really guilty. Ivan believes this because his half-brother, the surly, epileptic Smerdyakov, confesses to the actual deed but says that it is Ivan who must bear the responsibility because it is he who argued: 'There is no God: everything is permitted.' Under the burden of this horrible realisation, Ivan confesses his guilt to the astonished court-

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1. In the novel, this question becomes parallel to the question concerning the death of God. Hence, it is appropriate that Ivan, who says there is no God, should come to recognise himself as responsible for his father's death.



room:

"It was he [Smerdyakov], not my brother who killed our father. He murdered him and I incited him to it....

"Who doesn't desire his father's death?...I should think I am in my right mind...in the same nasty mind as all of you...as all these...ugly faces." He turned suddenly to the audience. "My father has been murdered and they pretend they are horrified," he snarled, with furious contempt. "They keep up the sham with one another. Liars! They all desire the death of their fathers. One reptile devours another....If there hadn't been a murder, they'd have been angry and gone home ill-humoured. It's a spectacle they want. Panem et circenses. Though I am one to talk! Have you any water? Give me a drink for Christ's sake!" He suddenly clutched his head.

(Brothers Karamazov, pp. 727-8)

These are virtually Ivan's last words in the novel, and we are told shortly afterwards that he 'is lying at death's door.'<sup>1</sup> His recognition of his guilt is too great for him to bear. As an honest man he will not conceal it or lie about it (he confessed to it on his own initiative). He sees himself as guilty with all men of the horrible desire to devour others. Ivan has reached the point where either he retains his humanity and condemns himself or he falls back into the silence and incoherent speech of madness. The passage just quoted shows that he does not condemn himself - he turns the accusation back on the people in the court-room. Instead, he retreats into the area where there is no speech because no rationality and no justice. He has no basis at all on which to condemn himself and so to repent.

Ivan found no way out of his damnation because Alyosha,

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1. F. Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. C. Garnett (Heinemann, London, 1912), p. 818.



Father Zossima's spiritual son, did not point unequivocally to Jesus' descent into the hell of man's sin and to His speaking out of the depths.<sup>1</sup> Where Ivan (and guilty mankind as symbolised by him) cannot speak, Jesus uttered the Amen to the divine judgment on man: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' If Alyosha had been able to witness more clearly to Christ, he would have been able to point Ivan to the one place where guilty man can judge his sin and repent of it. Dostoevsky shows us Alyosha's prayers for Ivan, but not Christ's prayers and Christ's compassion, and therefore he is unable to show Ivan coming through to speech and to repentance in Christ.

It is worth noting that a great deal of modern literature reaches a point similar to that reached by Ivan. One of the most significant cases is that of the composer Adrian Leverkühn in Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus. Mann shows that this self-absorbed genius is indirectly responsible for the death of one of his friends - Leverkühn will tolerate no intrusion into his private world and retaliates when his friend gains too intimate a relationship with him. At the conclusion of the novel, Leverkühn publishes his masterpiece, a vision of destruction, and makes a confession of his guilt. Thereafter he lapses into madness and silence. In the nineteenth century, Hölderlin is particularly notable as a poet

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1. E. Thurneysen, Dostoevsky, trans. K.R. Krim (Epworth, London, 1964), pp. 64ff. argues that Ivan does find redemption because God's forgiveness reaches down even into Hell. But God can redeem only if He brings the sinner to repentance, and there are no convincing signs in the novel that Ivan comes anywhere near repentance.

of great power who strangely and suddenly broke off into madness - it is almost as though he had been struck dumb. Wordsworth in his earlier years wrote with the radiance of the numinous until the problem of personal guilt emerged and then he wrote volumes of insignificant poetry, as if to conceal the fact that he could not look steadily at guilt and still speak. In these and other writers there is the uncanny sense that they have come into contact with the numinous and have been horrified at the guilt they have seen.

Strangely, however, although the problem of guilt has become almost an obsession in modern thought, there has been very little penetrating exploration of the nature and reality of conversion. Coleridge's Ancient Mariner is an important exception, but it is to theology that we must look to find the most helpful insights into the problem of the transition from guilt to new life. It is now time to discuss briefly the work of some theologians whose work is the fruit of genuine engagement with these problems.

### The Scottish Theologians of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

It may seem odd in a study of this kind to draw attention to the three Scottish theologians, Edward Irving, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen and John McLeod Campbell, yet in their work there was developed a series of insights of great importance into the problems encountered in nineteenth century thought. Briefly, these insights have to do with Christ's complete identification with guilty man and His repentance on his behalf. Where man was quite unable to

judge himself guilty and to repent, Christ made confession in his place and so made Himself the basis for the conversion of sinners. Thus, as He gives Himself to sinners by His Spirit, they live in Him and are liberated to judge themselves to be sinners and to turn to God.

These insights have their primary focus in the humanity of Jesus Christ. In their different but related ways, each of these theologians emphasised that Christ identified Himself really and totally with guilty man and that He thus made man's sin His own.<sup>1</sup> Irving and Erskine insisted that Christ took up fallen human nature, McLeod Campbell that in His humanity there was a movement from fallen man to God. But their most important contribution to theology concerned Christ's holiness.<sup>2</sup> For them, as, indeed, for the Christian Church as a whole, Christ's righteousness consisted in His fulfilling the law, but they interpreted this to mean that Christ loved all men (His neighbour) as Himself. They therefore stressed the active love of Christ, and especially His feeling the sins of His brethren as His own. Irving and McLeod Campbell argued that it was through His holiness and righteousness that He bore the sin of the world. That He was sinless means that He knew the utter evil of sin and could say the Amen in our humanity to the divine condemnation of it.

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1. Irving stressed that Christ assumed fallen humanity, Erskine that Christ became the Head of humanity and Campbell that His humanity was vicarious humanity.
  2. E. Irving, Christ's Holiness in Flesh (John Lindsay, Edinburgh, 1831); J.M. Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement (James Clarke, London, 1959), esp. pp. 114-9.

Jesus' sinlessness, or, to use the language employed earlier in this chapter, His innocence, thus meets the guilt of men. Men cannot judge themselves to be sinners,<sup>1</sup> but Jesus does this in their place, vicariously judging their sin and repenting of it. Further, as Irving in particular emphasised, Jesus loved His brethren as Himself in such a way that their sin really became His, and thus in His death He did away with it. Jesus, the sinless One, is the place where sinners find a new basis for their lives. In Him, and in Him alone, their sins are forgiven and they are able to judge themselves to be sinners and to repent.

One further aspect of their teaching must be mentioned here. Not only does Jesus' innocence, His loving His neighbour as Himself, mean that He bears His brethren's sins as His own, but it also means that He gives them all that is His. The repentance He accomplished is not locked up in Himself but is given to others. This communication of the life that is in Him is the Holy Spirit. He has the Spirit for us (Campbell), He baptises us in the Spirit (Irving). This doctrine of the Spirit is the necessary completion of the doctrine of the sinlessness of Christ, since it expresses the reality that all that Christ has He has for us.

This aspect of their teaching is of crucial importance to the subject of this study, since it assures the guilty man that all that is in Christ is his without reservation. The guilty man does not first have to repent and to become

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1. T. Erskine, The Brazen Serpent (David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1879), p. 60.



holy before he shares in Christ. On the contrary, it is a matter simply of receiving His Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Sinful man does not have to find, per impossible, a basis for repentance in himself, but the Spirit gives him that new basis which is nothing less than the repentance which took place in Christ's sinless humanity. The teaching of Edward Irving regarding the Spirit is particularly instructive. Irving argued that, if it is truly the case that Christ took 'to himself a body of our body, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bones',<sup>2</sup> then His righteousness was accomplished by the same power as other men are to attain theirs.

Christ's flesh was not holy by means of some special intrinsic power of sinlessness, but by virtue of His faith in the Father and His being filled with the Spirit. This means that the holiness which He wrought in our humanity may be communicated to us by the Spirit. The purification of our sinful humanity and its conversion to God which He perfected becomes ours through the Spirit. Thus, the Spirit of Jesus is the only hope for us guilty men. Only through His Spirit does the purification of man achieved in Jesus become ours, but through the Spirit it is ours without reservation.

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1. Pastorally, this was the central point in the teaching of these theologians; e.g., T. Erskine, The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel (David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1879).
  2. Quoted from the Scots Confession, article VIII, which is itself a quotation from Calvin, Institute, II, 12, 2. In 1831 Irving published The Confessions of Faith and the Books of Discipline of the Church of Scotland Anterior to the Westminster Confession (Baldwin and Cradock, London, 1831) since it was his earnest belief that his theology was merely a Biblical development of the doctrine of the original protestant Reformers.

Irving's work shows that any discussion of man's conversion must pay close attention to the Holy Spirit.

The above account of these three theologians is very brief and is intended only to indicate their relevance to the problem of conversion as it emerged in the nineteenth century. In later chapters of this study certain aspects of their work will be examined more closely. These men were greatly concerned for the spiritual welfare of the people of their generation: even Erskine of Linlathen, who was not a pastor, helped many troubled people to rejoice in God. It is hoped that their rich insight into the pastoral dimension of turning to God will be useful in assessing Karl Barth's understanding of conversion.

For these theologians it is only man in Christ by the Spirit who can turn from his guilt to God. No theologian in modern times has given this doctrine so thorough and comprehensive treatment as Karl Barth. It is to his work that we must look to find a thorough-going and systematic answer to the failure of the nineteenth century to find an adequate basis in man for the fulfilment of his new-found dimensions of subjectivity.

### Karl Barth

It has been argued above that with the Enlightenment and especially with nineteenth century Romantic and Idealist thought man became aware of new dimensions in his personal, subjective life, but that this awareness led not to self-fulfilment but to self-alienation. Starting with himself and refusing all 'alien' securities, man became guilty and



realised himself in alienation.

The early Barth broke with the tradition of starting with man and his experience.<sup>1</sup> In his Romans (second edition, 1921) he spoke of God as wholly Other, and stressed again and again that he must begin in faith alone. Man has no basis of security in himself: he must trust himself to the God who is wholly Other if he is to find himself.<sup>2</sup> Only if he lives by faith in the God who utterly transcends him will he not lose himself in alienation. And this God kills in order to make alive. The gospel of God is the KRISIS in which man is totally judged.<sup>3</sup> It could be said that Romans is a meditation on Jesus' saying: 'Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.' (Matt. 16: 25).

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1. Using insights drawn chiefly from Luther and Kierkegaard, Barth in Romans sustained an unmitigated attack on all forms of immediacy. Faith is not the immediacy of self-knowledge or experience.

'The Gospel requires - faith. It can therefore be neither directly communicated nor directly apprehended. Christ hath been appointed to be the Son of God - according to the Spirit (1. 4).

"Now, Spirit is the denial of direct immediacy. If Christ be very God, He must be unknown, for to be known directly is the characteristic mark of an idol" (Kierkegaard)'.  
 K. Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, trans. from sixth edition by E.C. Hoskyns (Oxford University Press, London, Oxford, New York, 1968), p. 38.

2. '[Those who walk in faith] know that, when men, regardless of the extent of their religious or other possessions, are wholly directed towards God and towards Him alone, they are found by Him and established by Him.' ibid., p. 132.
3. See, e.g., ibid., Chap. II, 'The Righteousness of Men.' Also, pp. 362-74.

It was not, however, until he wrote his book on Anselm, Fides Quaerens Intellectum, that he saw that every starting point within man himself can be wholly abandoned only if theology lives solely by looking to God.<sup>1</sup> God proves Himself and faith lives from this self-demonstration. God constitutes Himself our point of departure. Armed with this perception, Barth's belief that there can be no preparation for Christian faith was strengthened. Sinful man provides no 'presupposition' (not even knowledge of his guiltiness as a sinner) which may serve as a prolegomenon to revelation.

The Church Dogmatics is the product of this insight. Barth has attempted to look steadfastly at revelation and to know all things only as illuminated by that revelation. Where Hegel and Idealism sought to look only to man as he proved himself to be what he is, Barth sought to allow God to prove Himself to be the One He is.<sup>2</sup> He is the true and living God who has demonstrated Himself objectively in Jesus Christ and has also made Himself the subjective reality and possibility of revelation in the Holy Spirit.

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1. 'The only intelligere which interests Anselm is that "desired" by faith.' K. Barth, Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum, trans. I. Robertson (S.C.M., London, 1960), p. 16.
  2. 'God shows and proves in His self-revelation His freedom to begin with Himself....This is the freedom of His incarnation in Jesus Christ foreshadowed in His election and rule of Israel, the freedom of His Word, the freedom of His Spirit, the freedom of His grace. It is from first to last the freedom with which He proves His own existence, the proof which every human proof of His existence can only repeat if it is really to prove God's existence and not something different....' C.D. II/1, p. 304.



Stated in this way, however, it may seem that God proves Himself to be God at man's expense.<sup>1</sup> If this were the case, the fears of the Enlightenment and Idealism, that God is the Alien who alienates, would have some foundation. But in the Dogmatics Barth broke entirely with the Kierkegaardian idea that God is wholly Other.<sup>2</sup> God is, of

1. Barth says of his earlier work that 'redemption was viewed as consisting in the abolition of the creature, the swallowing of immanence by transcendence...' K. Barth, The Humanity of God, trans. J.N. Thomas (Collins, London, 1961), p. 43. Cf. C.D. IV/1, pp. 89f. In Romans (p. 38) he says: 'The Gospel speaks of God as He is: it is concerned with Him Himself and with Him only. It speaks of the Creator who shall be our Redeemer and of the Redeemer who is our Creator. It is pregnant with our complete conversion; for it announces the conversion of our creatureliness into freedom.' Apart from the oddity of saying that the gospel has to do only with God (does it not concern man's salvation, Rom. 1: 16?) two problems confront us here. First, what transition can there be from the sinner to the new man? Barth could not effectively solve this problem until he saw that the gospel speaks of Jesus Christ and therefore of the Creator become the creature. In Him there is a transition from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Second, if the Gospel announces 'the conversion of our creatureliness into freedom', is there not an overcoming of creatureliness and therefore an impossibility for creatures as creatures to receive salvation (except eschatologically)? Again, it was not until Barth saw that the gospel speaks of Jesus Christ, the Creator become creature, that he could speak of creatures receiving salvation in their present existence.
2. Barth came to think of this notion with horror. In the Dogmatics he likens it to idolatry since it has to do with thinking of God apart from Christ. In the Dogmatics he thinks Christologically. He speaks of God's togetherness with man. Cf. The Humanity of God (p. 45): 'Who God is and what He is in His deity He proves and reveals not in a vacuum as a divine being-for Himself, but precisely and authentically in the fact that He exists, speaks and acts as the partner of man, though of course the absolutely superior partner.'

course, other than man and his wholly transcendent Lord, but it is in the man Jesus Christ that He has proved Himself to be God. God has revealed Himself in the incarnation and cross of Jesus Christ. God has therefore shown Himself to be the One who is other than man only at the same time as He is wholly for man. As we see God giving Himself on the cross, we know that God's being Himself is identical with His being for us.

In this God, man finds all that he needs for his fulfilment. As man trusts Him, he finds his own truest life. In allowing Him to be his starting point he need fear no alienation, not even self-alienation. He does not have to search for this starting point - it is given to him in Jesus Christ. In Him, God has entered into the human condition in order to make an end of sinful man and to posit the righteous man in his place. Thus, it is simply by accepting Christ, by faith in Him, that sinners have a new basis for their life in the world.

Barth goes further than this. It is not only that sinners find a new basis for their lives, but that they find all they need in Christ. In themselves they are still guilty sinners, but in Christ they are already new men. Because Christ has become man, converted the human situation and brought it to God, man's whole justification, sanctification and vocation are already perfected in Him. Sinners have thus only to participate in Him. Their entire life is a matter of living in Christ.

When man lives in Christ he does not cease to be himself. Christ does not swallow him up. On the contrary,

Christ communicates Himself to other men through His Spirit. Through the Spirit Christ brings men to know Himself and their life in Him, and therefore He awakens them to be the men they are in Him. They become free, true men. Their subjectivity finds its proper fulfilment in Him. For as the Spirit orients them on Christ, they freely base themselves on Him, and, as they know Him as the One who has given Himself for them, they fulfil their lives by giving themselves to Him in love and in hope.

This, in briefest outline is Barth's definitive understanding of man's turning to God. The present study will confine itself almost exclusively to the Barth of the Church Dogmatics, because it is in this work that he treats man's conversion as taking place solely in Christ. In the Dogmatics he has given a systematic and exhaustive discussion of the mature conception of man in Christ. There will be scarcely any reference to Bultmann in this study since he compromises the radicalness of the truth of man's turning to God in Christ alone. In at least three respects Barth engages more closely with the problem of man's conversion than does Bultmann. First, according to Bultmann there is a preparation within fallen man for the reception of the gospel.<sup>1</sup> Man must come to understand himself as a sinner,

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1. For Bultmann, man can come to an understanding of himself as guilty and as fallen apart from knowledge of Christ. One of the outstanding features of his accounts of sin in his Theology of the New Testament, trans. K. Grobel (S.C.M., London, 1965), is that he treats it almost entirely in terms of man's perversion and alienation and not in terms of loss of fellowship with God or of enmity against God. The centre of his concept of sin is not the cross but man's death. In a similar fashion John Macquarrie, in his An Existentialist Theology (S.C.M., London, 1965) discusses man's inauthentic, fallen existence without reference to the cross.



as nothing, before he can receive the message of God's grace. Self-understanding provides a presupposition for faith. Yet, if the discussion earlier in this chapter is basically correct, man apart from Christ cannot know himself as sinner. Barth is much to be preferred in his doctrine that it is only in the light of Jesus Christ that man has true knowledge of himself. Also, Bultmann's doctrine looks suspiciously like the old doctrines of conditional grace in which a man was offered the gospel only when he showed signs of his brokenness by the law, only when he was prepared for it. Second, for Bultmann, Christ established no more than the possibility of life for other men. Men must realise that possibility by their decision of faith.<sup>1</sup> Yet, if God

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1. Bultmann says: 'The union of believers into one soma now (i.e., now that the salvation-occurrence is understood as an occurrence directed at man and happening to him) has its basis not in their sharing the same supernatural substance, but in the fact that in the word of proclamation Christ's death-and-resurrection becomes a possibility of existence in regard to which a decision must be made, and in the fact that faith seizes this possibility and appropriates it as the power that determines the existence of the man of faith.' Vol. I, op.cit., p. 302. Three comments can be made about this extraordinary statement. First, 'the union of believers into one soma with Christ' must be a reference to I Cor. 12: 13 (see p. 299) where it is said that 'by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body': if so, Bultmann is replacing the Spirit (some supernatural substance!, see pp. 333-4) with man's act of appropriation of the salvation event. Second, the proclamation of Christ's death-and-resurrection is merely the possibility offered to man, not the self-communication of the life which is in Christ. Third, according to Bultmann, human existence becomes authentic by choosing the proper possibility in a given moment. It becomes difficult, then, to think of man's decision of faith as other than the one possibility confronting man of choosing in relation to his own death. Is not Christ merely the occasion for a decision which can be made apart from Christ? Is not the decision of faith similar to the decision in relation to death which is to be found in Heidegger and existentialism generally. J.K.S. Reid, Our Life in Christ (S.C.M., London, 1963), pp. 75-7, makes some similar observations about Bultmann's understanding of the impartation of life in Christianity.



has truly given Himself in Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is the actuality of man's salvation and not merely its possibility. Bultmann inevitably comes dangerously near to attributing justifying and creative power to man's decision of faith, and thus to locating man's new starting point within sinful man himself. Barth is much to be preferred here since for him there is no doubt whatever that God has given Himself in Jesus Christ and that He Himself is man's new life. There is therefore also no doubt that man's act of faith has no regenerating power, nor that it participates in the salvation given by God. Third, Bultmann has been very aware that post-Enlightenment man does not believe in an objective God who leaves his subjective life unaltered. A merely objective God is superfluous. God is God for us only as He enters our existence, i.e., our decisions and our subjecthood. It is well known that his demythologisation programme is an attempt to speak of God and the gospel only in terms which touch man's existence. Yet Bultmann has no doctrine of the Spirit<sup>1</sup> as the Spirit of God who proceeds from God's inner life, from God's own Subjecthood, and who enters man's inner life and subjecthood. Unlike Barth, he has no doctrine of the Trinity, no doctrine of God's inner knowledge of Himself flowing outward to become the ground of man's inner knowledge of Him. Barth speaks consistently of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> God is always

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1. Cf. J.K.S. Reid, op.cit., pp. 76-7.

2. F.W. Camfield has given an admirable summary of Barth's teaching on this point: '... we cannot speak of a natural and self-existing openness of man for God. Man's openness for God is wholly grounded on God's openness for man; it is participation in that openness. But the  
(Contd.)

Subject, always Lord, making Himself known to man's subjectivity. Since the Spirit is the Spirit of the giving of the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father, He is the Spirit of God's own knowledge of Himself. As this Spirit of God's self-giving, He is not only the Spirit of God's inner life but also the Spirit of God's outer life, His life for others. He proceeds from the Father and the Son and enters man's inner life, there to reign as the ground of man's personal obedience to God. Further, Bultmann finds that he must reject or at least translate much of the New Testament language about Christ's sacrifice for us: it has meaning for us only as it coincides with man's decision of faith. But for Barth, the objective, once-for-all salvation perfected in Christ is communicated by His Spirit into our subjective life. The reality of reconciliation in Christ is communicated to us: it is not our faith and decision which makes it real.

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ground of this openness of God for man lies in the fact that He is open to Himself. To put it otherwise: God can objectify Himself to man in order to be known to him, because He is already and in His own being object to Himself, the Father to the Son through the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian conception of God which is involved in the Biblical witness speaks of a divine subject which, as such, is object to itself; of an internal self-communion and self-communication which eternally is. Knowability therefore belongs to the very nature of God.' F.W. Camfield, 'Development and Present Stage of the Theology of Karl Barth', in Reformation Old and New, ed., F.W. Camfield (Lutterworth, London, 1947), p. 43. One thing needs to be added to this account: as man receives knowledge of God's self-revelation through the Spirit, man's subjecthood is called into the genuine decision of obedience. Man as subject obeys God as Subject. Cf. J. Brown, Subject and Object in Modern Theology (S.C.M., London, 1955), pp. 161-3.

The study which follows will be devoted to understanding Barth's account of conversion as found in the Dogmatics. First, the being of God for man will be discussed (Chapters II and III). Since God has realised His being for man in Christ, the following five chapters (Chapters IV - VIII) will be concerned with Barth's account of Christ for us. A chapter on Barth's understanding of sin follows (Chapter IX) and the final four chapters will deal with man's actual participation in Christ (Chapters X - XIII). Throughout, what Barth says will be summarised, often in some detail, in order to ensure that his precise and subtle analysis has been grasped. In general, these expositions will not include critical observations but will be concerned to present Barth's meaning in its own terms and strength. Assessment and criticism will follow the expositions.

It will be argued that Barth's account of conversion is extremely helpful and fundamentally sound, but that it needs development at one crucial point. Barth holds that God has given Himself for man in His Son and that in Christ man is converted to God. As other men participate in Him through the Spirit, they actually turn to God. Barth's doctrine of the Spirit is strong, but it must be made stronger still. Unless this doctrine is strengthened, conversion will tend to remain locked up in Christ and not reach other men. It will be argued that there is a persistent tendency in Barth to undervalue the Spirit in the humanity of Christ and also His work in other men. It will not for a moment be suggested that the Spirit works independently of Christ



(to argue that would be to endanger the unity of God the Trinity and therefore the one and undivided self-giving of God to man),<sup>1</sup> but it will be argued that theology must think of God's self-giving in thoroughly trinitarian terms, and especially that theology must speak of God's giving Himself, on the ground of His Son's self-giving on the cross for sinners, in the Spirit to indwell sinners. In his early days, Barth recognised that the doctrine of the Trinity is the solution for all theological questions,<sup>2</sup> and towards the end of his life he suggested that his theology needed development in the direction of man himself, i.e., that the

1. J.R. Williams, The Era of the Spirit (Logos International, Plainfield, New Jersey, 1971), criticises Barth for not speaking of an 'independent and decisive operation' of the Spirit (p. 72), but, in the measure that the Spirit is thought of as acting independently of Christ, the unity of the body of Christ is divided. The Church tends to be thought of as the body of the Spirit. Also, the unity of God is endangered because the work of the Spirit is not the out-pouring of what was perfected in the Son: the Son and the Spirit are separated. Thus God performs two acts of love toward man, one in the Son and a different act in the Spirit. God no longer undividedly loves man in the great act in the Son which completes itself in the work of the Son through the Spirit.
2. H. Zahrnt, The Question of God, trans. R.A. Wilson (Collins, London, 1969), p. 101. Zahrnt thinks that Barth dissolves temporal reality into the eternal monologue 'conducted by God with himself in three persons' (p. 112). But surely Barth is correct to see God as the source of the reality of all that is not God, and also to see the intra-trinitarian life of God as the fellowship which is the ground of all fellowship. Does not Zahrnt come close to blasphemy in calling the fellowship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit a monologue? Like Barth, Edward Irving saw that 'the doctrine of the Trinity ought ever to be held as the great fountainhead of all doctrine whatever,' Collected Writings, Vol. 5, ed. G. Carlyle (Strahan, London, 1865), p. 430. As with Barth, he saw the fellowship within God as the ground of God's fellowship with the reality which He posits as other than Himself: 'union in distinctness is the key to the whole mystery.' p. 441. Irving's last theological work, The Day of Pentecost, is a great meditation on the Trinity as God fulfilling His will to dwell in fallen men. G.S. Strachan, The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1973), pp. 128-33 points to this.



doctrine of God the Spirit needed greater prominence in his work.<sup>1</sup> It is just this development that this study sees as being urgently needed.

In order to make this development of the doctrine of the triune God and especially of the Spirit, and hence to move toward man, the work of Irving, Erskine and Campbell will prove extremely helpful. In particular, their witness to the reality of the Spirit first in Jesus Christ and then in sinners will be brought to bear on Barth. As Irving clearly realised, to speak of the Spirit in Jesus Christ and then in sinners, is to speak of the God who loves man as Himself. It is to speak of the triune God, the God who from eternity has purposed to dwell in man (the Father), who has embodied that purpose in His Son, and who is now fulfilling that purpose in the Spirit of His Son who actually dwells in sinners and conforms them to the image of His Son. Like Barth, Irving sighed after the Spirit: Veni Creator Spiritus; but where Barth constantly speaks of our little conversion in contrast to the great conversion in the Son, Irving saw no limitation to the power of the conversion in Christ to become that of the sons of God through the indwelling of His Spirit.

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1. H. Ott, Theology and Preaching, trans. H. Knight (Lutterworth, London, 1965), pp. 10-11. Ott notes Barth's concern that theology make 'a turning toward man himself' (p. 10) and that it be a 'Theology of the Holy Spirit' (p. 11), but his book, though an hermeneutical interpretation of one of Barth's favourite texts (The Heidelberg Catechism) and though it covers some of the same area as this study, has little to say about the Spirit.

In calling for this development of Barth, together with a call for understanding the turning of man from sin to God as having even greater value to God's love than Barth allows, it is hoped that something like an adequate account of conversion will emerge, an account that goes some way toward giving an answer to modern man's failure to find a satisfying realisation of his subjectivity.

## CHAPTER II

### DEUS PRO NOBIS: GOD'S ELECTION OF MAN

In modern times, especially where Calvinism has been influential, the doctrine of predestination has often generated the feeling that God is not entirely loving to man. It has inspired terror and immorality.<sup>1</sup> Terror, because it has been believed that before men have done anything either good or evil God, according to His good pleasure, has predestined some to salvation and the rest to damnation.<sup>2</sup> Immorality, because it has been believed that nothing a man does will affect his eternal destiny, that there is an immoveable indifference at the heart of life which does not respond to him, and that God is not turned to him and therefore he cannot turn to God.<sup>3</sup> Even

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1. It is probably true to say that it has also inspired hatred of God.
  2. See, e.g., Robert Burns' Holy Willie's Prayer, which is to some extent at least a response to the doctrines of predestination in Chapter III of the Westminster Confession.
  3. See, e.g., James Hogg, The Confessions of a Justified Sinner, first published in 1824. This novel is a moving protest against the loss of personal responsibility which is entailed in certain forms of high Calvinism. It describes the disintegration of a young man's personal identity, mainly due to his belief that his actual sins are not his own doing, or, at least, that God does not hold him responsible for them. Though Hogg is dealing with a travesty of Calvinism, there can be little doubt that he is pointing to a very real tendency in the practice of Calvinism. His book is of interest to this study in that it was published at about the same time as Irving, Thomas Erskine and McLeod Campbell were beginning their revision of Calvinism.

where it has inspired confidence in God and holiness of life it has caused men to doubt that God offers the gospel to all men and it has helped to sow an individualistic form of Church life where holiness means not service but the enjoyment of the benefits of salvation. It has encouraged the belief that there is in God a secret reserve, a reserve hidden behind His revealed concern for men in Christ, and that His good pleasure is therefore at least partly and perhaps primarily an enjoyment of Himself and an indifference to man. Since God is not wholly for man (at best He is wholly for only some men), man can hardly be wholly for Him, wholly turned to Him. It may well be that the doctrine of predestination was intended by Calvin to serve the good news of salvation by grace apart from works, but the doctrine inevitably became bad news. Perhaps, as Blake said of Milton's attempt to justify the ways of God to men, it was of the devil's party without knowing it. (The Anglican 39 Articles shrewdly point out that the devil can use this doctrine to 'thrust men into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living...' (Article XVII). The devilish use of predestination is the suggestion that God intends less than the best for man, and thus man is thrown back into despair and the immoral life of desperation.) Barth's doctrine of predestination is unequivocal good news. Of all things which can be said about God it is the best.<sup>1</sup>

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 3: 'The doctrine of election is the sum of the Gospel because of all words that can be said...it is the best.'



There is no secret reserve in Him. His good pleasure from all eternity is His will to reveal and to give Himself for the salvation of the world. It is good news about God and therefore creates unreserved confidence in Him and holiness as service to the world. As good news about God it therefore creates unreserved turning to Him.<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of election in the Dogmatics is an essential part of the doctrine of God. This is because God predestines Himself in predestining man.<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of predestination is therefore good news about God, about the God who predestines Himself for loss that He may predestine man for gain.

Barth knows of no other theologian who has dared to place the doctrine of predestination necessarily in the doctrine of God.<sup>3</sup> He is surprised and saddened that others have not found themselves constrained to do this. He believes there is nothing arbitrary in this move.<sup>4</sup> The revelation of God in Jesus Christ constrains him to say that God wills to be Himself only together with the election of man. God will not be Himself, He will not be God, apart from also and at the same time electing His people.<sup>5</sup> In his own words:

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1. Because God is wholly turned to us, there is no terror mixed with our fear of Him, and therefore we have the courage wholly to turn to Him.

2. C.D. II/2, p. 3.

3. ibid., p. 76.

4. ibid., p. 77.

5. ibid., p. 76.

...we maintain of God that in Himself, in the primal and basic decision in which He wills to be and actually is God, in the mystery of what takes place from and to all eternity within Himself, within His triune being, God is none other than the One who in His Son or Word elects Himself, and in and with Himself elects His people.  
(C.D. II/2, p. 76)

This position is so rich in significance for the understanding of man's turning to God that several comments may be made at this point.

1. Although by no means the most important point to be made in this connection, it is worth noting first of all that in claiming this Barth has seemed to be saying more than we are permitted to say.<sup>1</sup> It has seemed too good to say that God cannot be thought of as being as good as this. To say that God has committed Himself to man with the same ultimacy as He is committed to Himself has seemed too daring an affirmation. There have certainly not been lacking theologians who have given predestination a dominating and

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1. According to Barth, the whole classical tradition, with its doctrine of the decrees of election taking place in the hidden counsel of God, said nothing of God's predestination of Himself for us men. F. Turretin, for example, in his discussion of predestination says much about God's decrees as they relate to men, but is silent regarding the meaning of these decrees for God Himself (Institutio Theologiae Elencticae, in Reformed Dogmatics, ed. and trans. J.W. Beardslee III (Oxford University Press, New York, 1965). Similarly, the Westminster Confession makes no mention of God's predestination of Himself in Christ. The impression is created that God predestines men rather much as an Oriental despot makes unbreakeable decrees for his subjects. Contrast, however, the Scots Confession, whose chapter (Art. VIII) on election deals with Christ's incarnation and death for sinners. Barth knew this Confession well: The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, trans. J.L.M. Haire and I. Henderson (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1938) is a commentary on it. Barth sees hints of his position in it and mentions it approvingly in C.D. II/2, pp. 62, 154 and 308. It is in Athanasius that he finds an interpretation of en Christo which points most nearly to what he has in mind (ibid., pp. 108ff.) but even he falls short of his conception.

even determinating status in their theology,<sup>1</sup> but none have allowed God's election of men to have for God the same seriousness as His election of Himself. Barth maintains this because the election of man takes place not in the secret counsel of the divine decrees but in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1: 4). Man is elect in Jesus Christ, and He is the well-beloved Son in whom God elects Himself. Further, in electing man, God gives Himself in Christ's death on the cross. The election of man means for God nothing less than putting Himself at risk and giving Himself to the uttermost that He might save man. This doctrine converts the terror which the scholastic doctrine inspires<sup>2</sup> into worship. It leads men to give themselves up to God, not in dread of the secret decree, but in the awe of adoration of Him who has given Himself for them. Barth's doctrine is not too good, but precisely that marvellously good thing which the revelation of God's election in Christ obliges us to say.

2. Barth's doctrine means that with the same seriousness with which God maintains and guarantees His own being, He maintains, guarantees and rescues the being of man. This is

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1. See, e.g., the dominating role which B.B. Warfield would ascribe to the doctrine, 'Predestination in the Reformed Confessions', Studies in Theology (Oxford University Press, New York, 1932), pp. 117-231.
  2. The Calvinist form of double predestination is particularly frightening, involving as it does the doctrine of an unconditional decree of reprobation. One writer said of it: 'it is anti-theology; and if sincerely believed in for one moment, it would, in the estimation of the person who believes in it, degrade God's character beneath that of the most inhuman tyrant that ever breathed.' J. Morison, The Extent of the Propitiation (London, 1847), p. 130.



the main point. 'He is the One who in and with Himself elects His people.' According to Barth, a philosophical notion of God's self-existence cannot indicate the reality of the living God. But in Jesus Christ we know that God is He who, in constant faithfulness to Himself, ever posits Himself anew.<sup>1</sup> He does this in His being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God does not maintain Himself in the solitariness of self-existence (after the model of, for example, the Ego of German Idealism or of Allah), but in the ever rich and constant fellowship of Father, Son and Spirit. This means that God is the One He is only in fellowship with His Son. But His Son is also He who became man. Thus the election and salvation of man is guaranteed by God with nothing less than His own being. To put it in its strongest form, it means that were God (per impossible) to lose man He would also lose Himself.<sup>2</sup> It is not as though God looked to His own being and only as a generous afterthought looked to man. If this were so, when the point came that in helping man God's own being were endangered, He would draw back from man. But the truth in Christ is that God really did endanger and put Himself at risk in rescuing man.

3. In the first point it was noted that much theology has not understood predestination as good news about God. It needs also to be noted that this good news stands in

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1. This is argued in C.D. II/1, 'The Being of God in Act', pp. 257-72. Cf. C.D. II/2, p. 218.

2. Although Barth never puts the matter this way, it is not inaccurate to say that his doctrine implies this.



opposition to the doctrines of modern culture about the nature of being and the way in which man is held in being. According to J.-P. Sartre, man must choose himself, elect himself. Sartre's existentialism belongs in the realm of anthropology and not theology, but it does bear on theology in that according to him in no height or depth is there any being which will so commit itself to another that it wills its own loss for the sake of gain for the other. (Where this does seem to happen Sartre discerns a pathological process at work.) In relation to Barth the following points emerge:

(a) Sartre is most concerned to find an authentic existence, and he understands man to exist truly when he chooses himself and is not in subservience to another.<sup>1</sup> There is here the faintest echo of the Christian doctrine of God, i.e., of He who is Himself in perfect freedom, without restraint or constraint, He who freely elects Himself.<sup>2</sup>

(b) But Sartre understands that which truly exists as

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1. J.-P. Sartre, L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme (Les Editions Nagel, Paris, 1946), p. 22.
  2. Barth argues that Sartre gives man the clothing of the conventional Western concept of God, and while this seems to be a fair estimate of Sartre's understanding of the 'grace' of man (in effect, his gracelessness) it is hardly fair of his very real desire for freedom. (C.D. III/3, pp. 338ff). It could well be argued that his concept of freedom is a kind of ultimate development of Pico della Mirandola's ideas about man's freedom to determine his place in the hierarchy of being (Chapter I, p. However this may be, it is not hard to see in Sartre's claims for man's freedom an echo of the freedom which comes to man in Christ, i.e., the freedom which, as Barth argues, is even an autonomy.

that which exists for itself: it decides for itself, être pour soi. In this way man projects himself from le néant. Man must guarantee himself, no-one keeps him but himself. No other is for him, he alone is for himself. Therefore when he is seriously threatened he can look to no other, only to himself. Thus it is inconceivable in Sartre's world that another, let alone God, if He existed, should bind himself to another to the extent of putting himself in real danger for him.

(c) Sartre lays great stress on the idea that in choosing himself a man also chooses for others. 'When we say that a man chooses himself, we do mean that each of us must choose for himself, but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men.'<sup>1</sup> Again, there is here a pale resemblance to Barth's doctrine of election, i.e., that in electing Himself God also elects others. But, again, it is the antithesis of Christian doctrine which meets us here. Because Sartre cannot conceive of a man caring for another with the same seriousness with which he cares for himself (since being is être pour soi) he does not mean that a man in choosing himself does any more than commit himself to the choice which others should make. In choosing himself a man is not committed to loss because others do not choose themselves. Sartre (because he has no notion of an unequivocal being for other) could never say of any man what Barth does of Jesus Christ, 'In that He wills Himself...He also wills them [other men]....'<sup>2</sup>

1. J.-P. Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, trans. P. March, (Methuen, London, 1966), p. 29.

2. C.D. II/2, p. 117.

4. Barth does not explicitly connect his doctrine of election with the saying, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', but it seems that no passage of Holy Scripture puts more directly what Barth wishes to affirm in his doctrine of election. As God loves Himself so He loves man. It is most helpful to put the doctrine in this light since it points to the righteousness of God in election. It also indicates that the goal of election is the free turning to God on man's part. As God is love in His free turning to man, He determines Himself for the free turning of man to Himself. He so loves men that He wills for them love of Himself in their free turning to Him. This saying further indicates that it is in the cross that the election of man is accomplished. God loves man as Himself, i.e., completely and wholly and without reservation. He executed this love in sending His Son to death, in the complete giving of Himself. God loves man with His entire being, just as He loves Himself entirely. Barth's doctrine of election argues this, since he shows that the glory which God from eternity willed to share with man actually overflowed for man's salvation in the event of Christ's death.

This, then, is the primary affirmation of Barth's doctrine of election: God elects man together with Himself. Since this is known in Jesus Christ he unfolds this affirmation through a consideration of Him.

Barth first claims that 'before Him [Jesus Christ] and without Him and beside Him God does not...elect or will anything.'<sup>1</sup> He is the beginning of all God's ways and

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1. ibid., p. 94.

works.<sup>1</sup> This is so because He was in the beginning with God and He became the God-man. He is God and man and mediates between God and man.<sup>2</sup> The opening of the Fourth Gospel (vs. 1-2) is the primary Scriptural witness to this.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of this understanding Barth says that 'over and against all that is really outside God, Jesus Christ is the eternal will of God, the eternal decree of God and the eternal beginning of God.'<sup>4</sup> All that takes place outside God has its basis in Jesus Christ. If this is so there is no place for a secret counsel of God in which the absolute decrees of Calvinist theology might be established. Barth agrees that all that takes place ad extra has its origin in a sphere above and before the ad extra, but, as the sphere where God is with Himself (cf. Jn. 1: 1), the sphere of His good-pleasure, it is not an 'empty and undetermined'<sup>5</sup> sphere where anything like a decretum absolutum could be enacted. Barth asks:

What choice can precede the choice by which God has of Himself chosen to have with Himself in the beginning of all things the Word which is Jesus? What decretum absolutum is there that secretly or openly can over-ride or challenge this decretum absolutum?  
(C.D. II/2, pp.100-1)

Thus Barth holds that all passages of Scripture referring to the beginning of God's ways and works ad extra

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1. ibid., p. 94.

2. ibid., p. 94.

3. ibid., pp. 95ff.

4. ibid., p. 99.

5. ibid., p. 100.



describe this beginning under the name of Jesus Christ, whose person is that of the executor within the universe and time of the primal decision of divine grace, the person itself being obviously the content of this decision. (C.D. II/2, p. 103)

In other words, God begins nothing, plans nothing and does nothing except in Jesus Christ, who was with Him in the beginning and is the executor and content of His will in the world.

On this basis Barth states that 'the predestination of God is the election of Jesus Christ.'<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of election refers to both the God who elects and to the man who is elected.<sup>2</sup> In the strength of the statement 'the predestination of God is the election of Jesus Christ' and of the truth that He is 'both very God and very man',<sup>3</sup> two fundamental assertions may be made with confidence. First, Jesus Christ is the electing God and, second, Jesus Christ is the elected man.<sup>4</sup>

The first assertion is primary and must be considered first.<sup>5</sup> Jesus Christ is the electing God. To avoid misunderstanding it must be stated that Barth does not deny that the Father and the Spirit also elect,<sup>6</sup> although he puts almost no stress on the electing of the Father, which is so important in much classical theology. Barth means that Jesus Christ is fully God and that He elects as God. In

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1. ibid., p. 103.

2. ibid., p. 103.

3. ibid., p. 103.

4. ibid., p. 103.

5. ibid., p. 103.

6. ibid., p. 105: 'It is...true that He [Jesus Christ] does not elect alone, but in company with the electing of the Father and the Holy Spirit.'

Him the divine election is realised, executed and achieved. This, as will be shown, He does as the obedient One, and therefore He is not only partner to the divine decision of election but also the One who executes this election.

What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the electing God? Jesus Christ was in the beginning with God not merely in the sense that all things were in His knowledge and direction, but especially 'He was also in the beginning with God as "the first-born of all creation" (Col. 1: 15),... Himself the divine decision with respect to all creation.'<sup>1</sup> Thus Jesus Christ is not only 'one object of divine good-pleasure' among others. 'On the contrary, He is the sole object of this good-pleasure, for in the first instance He Himself is this good-pleasure, the will of God in action.'<sup>2</sup> Just as He is not merely an instrument of the divine freedom, but 'the divine freedom itself in its operation ad extra,' not merely the reconciler but the reconciliation, so also He is not only the Elected but He Himself is also the Elector.<sup>3</sup> From the first He participates in the divine election.<sup>4</sup> It is also His electing. He posits the beginning of all things and He executes the decision which issues in the establishment of the covenant between God and man.<sup>5</sup>

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1. ibid., p. 104.

2. ibid., p. 104.

3. ibid., pp. 104-5.

4. ibid., p. 105.

5. ibid., p. 105.

Nothing less than the certainty of our election depends on this truth. If He were not the electing God, in whom both the decision of election and the execution of the election have taken place, we would have to look past Him in asking about the certainty of our election. The certainty of election would disappear because the knowledge of our election would not be revealed in the One who executed the election. It would be clear that Jesus Christ had executed the election, but it would be dark and obscure as to where the decision of the election was grounded. Speculation as to divine decrees within the hiddenness of the divine counsel would overwhelm the certainty that the divine decision took place in the Son. Worst of all, it would become impossible to resist the terrible thought that the decision of election may have preceded the election of grace - it would become impossible to answer the awful fear that the divine decision of election was different in character, in fact ungracious, from the execution of the election of grace. It would seem at least possible, and certainly not impossible, that God could have decided on the election of some and the rejection of others and then committed to Jesus the election of grace for those to whom the prior decision of election referred. For if Jesus Christ only executed and does not reveal the decision of election, the decision in which He participated, how can we be sure that the decision of election has the character of grace which we see in the execution of the election? If the whole fullness of God were not pleased to dwell in Jesus Christ even and particularly in the decision of election,

how can we be sure that the decision of election is wholly gracious? It is not sufficient to assert that God is gracious if the primal decision of God regarding man, the primal decision of election, was not made in the One who executed that decision, for then how can we know the character of that decision? If Jesus Christ is not the electing God, we are ignorant of this primal decision of election and therefore we cannot effectively resist the (demonic) possibility that the primal decision of God regarding man is not gracious.

The awful abyss into which a failure to realise this doctrine abandons men can be seen in the pastoral sphere. When I ask the fundamental question about myself: 'Am I elect?' I cannot answer by pointing to Jesus Christ and by saying that in Him the decision regarding my election has been made, and that His death is the execution of the decision He made. I can only say that the decision has been made in the secret counsel of God and that this decision is hidden from me. I know my election not in Jesus Christ but indirectly in my awareness, whether of my experience or my works, i.e., in the effects of His election. Further, in believing in my election I would not know into whose hands I was committing myself.<sup>1</sup>

This dreadful situation is overcome and answered when we look to Jesus Christ. Of Him 'we know nothing more surely and definitely than this: that in free obedience to His Father He elected to be man, and as man, to do the will

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1. ibid., p. 105.



of God.<sup>1</sup> He is therefore clearly 'the concrete and manifest form of the divine decision' and therefore it is in Him

that the eternal election becomes immediately and directly the promise of our own election as it is enacted in time, our calling and summoning to faith, our assent to the divine intervention on our behalf, the revelation of ourselves as the sons of God and of God as our Father, the communication of the Holy Spirit who is none other the communication of this act of obedience, the Spirit of obedience itself, and for us the Spirit of adoption.

(C.D. II/2, pp. 105-6)

Because Jesus Christ is the electing God, because He has freely enacted the election of God, He is the concrete form of the divine decision and therefore it is in Him that we know and are assured of our own election. In this way He answers all our fears about election. He is the embodiment of election, its decision, its execution, its fulfilment, and therefore it is in Him that we are elect.

Traditional theologies of election were not prepared to give this plenitude of meaning to 'en Christo'. Only Athanasius, Augustine, the Scots Confession and Coccejus approached it, but even they fell short of giving it the fullness of meaning it needs if it is to guarantee our election not merely by means of Christ but in Christ. Ephesians 1: 4 - 'as He [the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ] chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world' - must be interpreted as meaning that the divine decision took place in Him so that the revelation of the decision is made in the One who executed it. The whole

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1. ibid., p. 105.

of election is to be found in Him and in Him alone.

This doctrine of the fullness of meaning for the Pauline 'en Christo', of Jesus Christ the electing God, includes the doctrine that Jesus Christ is the electing God as the obedient One. It is only as the obedient One that He can embody the divine good-pleasure to all that is not God. But as the obedient One He is the very will of God in its operation ad extra. As the obedient One He embodies the divine election and therefore it is in Him that we are elect. That He is the obedient One means that He enacts in time the eternal divine decision to which He was partner and that He communicates to us this act of obedience of His through the Holy Spirit, or, rather, that the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of this act of obedience, is the Spirit of adoption in such a way that we are brought into the divine good-pleasure, the sonship, which is in Christ. Put summarily, this means that the Son embodied the divine good-pleasure in His obedience and that we are adopted into this good-pleasure by the Spirit of this obedience.

No diminution of the election of Jesus Christ is implied by saying that He is the obedient One. It is certainly true that He elects in obedience, but since it is genuine obedience 'it is His own decision and election' and so 'no less divinely free than the electing and decision of the Father and the Holy Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> Further, according to Barth, the peculiar divine dignity of the living God, and of the Son in particular, is His humility. In IV/1 of the

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1. ibid., p. 105.

Dogmatics Barth argues that the incarnation of the Son does not deny His divinity but is the expression of the divinity, which, because it is genuine divinity, is not afraid to serve but becomes itself in serving.

Barth's concentration on the obedience of Jesus Christ in election has been stressed for four reasons. First, the doctrine of election in Christ is essential to Barth's understanding of the turning of men to God. In later parts of this study it will be seen that according to Barth salvation is already complete in Christ and that other men have their salvation as they are awakened by His Spirit to participate in what is already theirs in Him. Further, that salvation is complete in Christ through His obedience gives Christ a peculiar proximity to other men who are to live their salvation through their obedience. Second, Barth's concentration on the obedience of Jesus Christ shows that the divine election was fulfilled not in heaven and before time (though it was prefigured there) but on earth and in time in the supremely concrete event of the obedience to the cross. The divine election therefore has a glorious proximity to us men. Third, prominence has been given to Barth's doctrine of the obedience of Christ because in the assessment of Barth's understanding of election (in the next chapter) it will be argued that what Barth maintains about Jesus Christ as the electing God can be maintained with equal and perhaps greater force by keeping the traditional doctrine that the Father is in the first instance the electing God. But if it is at the same time maintained, as traditional theology did not to its



great loss and as Barth does to its great gain, that Jesus Christ is also the electing God, all that Barth has so helpfully said about election in Christ can be maintained (because He is the electing God as the obedient One) while also saying (what Barth rather neglects) that the election of God moves forward to a purpose of the Father which is enacted in the obedience of the Son. In making this extension of Barth's doctrine it is hoped to draw out the often unsuspected proximity of the Son of the Father to those He adopts (in the Spirit) as the sons of His Father. It is hoped to show that the purpose of the Father needs to be taken into account in speaking of the election of God, but that this purpose can be explicated legitimately only by looking solely to the Son in His obedience to this purpose. As we study the Son in His active obedience, in His electing as the Subject of election, we see the Father's purpose to be even more human than Barth has shown it to be. This goes beyond what Barth so convincingly argues (that the divine electing of the Son, as the Subject of election, drives toward as its completion the human being elected of the Son, as the Object of election), and implies that even as God, as the Subject of election, the Son entered into the closest proximity with the human condition. And, finally, Barth's theme of the obedience of the electing God has been stressed for a reason already made explicit. In relation to men's turning to God, the obedience of the Son means that the revelation of the decision of the divine election takes place in the One who executed it, and therefore men know the electing God. They know the God to whom they entrust them-



selves, as they do not if the election is decided in a beginning of God's ways and acts apart from Jesus Christ.

The first assertion drives toward the second assertion as its completion. That Jesus Christ is the electing God needs to be completed with the assertion: 'Jesus Christ is the elected man'. This second and dependent assertion means more than that Jesus Christ is the prime example and mirror of what election always and everywhere means.<sup>1</sup> It means that He is the Elect One. This uniqueness does not exclude others: it includes them. This cannot be said in virtue of His humanity as such - we could never say of a man that other men are elect in Him.<sup>2</sup> It can be said only in virtue of His being also the Creator. It is because as the obedient One He willed to become man that we can say of His humanity that it is unique and yet in its uniqueness others are elect in Him. Thus Barth's first assertion stands as the presupposition of the second and makes it necessary.

If the testimony of Holy Scripture concerning this man is true, that this man does stand before God above and on behalf of others, then this man is no mere creature but He is also the Creator, and His own electing as Creator must have preceded His own election as creature. (C.D. II/2, p. 116)

Far from making the humanity of Jesus Christ secondary and, as it were, a mere adjunct of the divinity, it means that the humanity is essential and enhanced in importance. It means that

before all created reality,...the eternal divine decision as such had as its object and content the existence of this one created being, the man Jesus of Nazareth,....[and] further that in, and with the

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1. ibid., p. 118.

2. ibid., p. 116.

existence of this man the eternal divine decision has as its object and content the execution of the divine covenant with men, the salvation of all men.  
(C.D. II/2, p. 116)

From the beginning the eternal divine decision has had in view the humanity of Christ, the humanity of this one Elect man in whom the covenant with all others would be established.

It was in His humanity that He brought election to other men. In the execution of divine election He wills not only Himself but also us men. 'In that He (as God) wills Himself (as man), He also wills them [i.e., us men].'<sup>1</sup> It is therefore true that He elects in His humanity (though only because He is God, the God-man) and that we are elect in His elect humanity.

What singles Him out from the rest of the elect, and yet also, for the first time, unites Him with them, is the fact that as elected man He is also the electing God, electing them in His own humanity.  
(C.D. II/2, p. 117)

It is therefore the humanity of Jesus Christ which carries the burden of election. This is true only because it is also the humanity of the Creator but it is precisely as this humanity that it bears the divine election. To summarise: He elects as God, but in His obedience as God He became man.<sup>2</sup> He is therefore not merely one of the elect (though He is this), but also the Elect One in whom all others are elect.

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1. ibid., p. 117.

2. This does not imply subordinationism. See Chapter V, p. 222.

Having elucidated the connection between Jesus Christ as the electing God and as the Elect One, and seen that the humanity bears the election, we must look carefully at what Barth means by calling Jesus Christ the Elect man.

Too meagre an account of our election in the humanity of Christ has been given in traditional theology. It has certainly managed to say things of great importance and Barth gladly affirms these. But in affirming them he finds that they demand a wider significance than ever the traditional account gave them. (Just as traditional theology gave too narrow an account of the divinity of Christ in election, overlooking its active part in election, so it gave too narrow an account of His elect humanity, overlooking it as the basis of the election of others.)

In relation to the passive election of Jesus Christ the great exponents of the traditional doctrine of predestination developed an insight which we, too, must take as our starting-point, because, rightly understood, it contains within itself everything else which must be noted and said in this connection. The insight is this: that in the predestination of the man Jesus we see what predestination is always and everywhere - the acceptance and reception of man only by the free grace of God. Even in the man Jesus there is...no self-sufficient goodness, which can precede His election to divine sonship....It is by the work of the Word of God, by the Holy Spirit, that He is conceived and born without sin, that He is what He is, the Son of God; by grace alone. As He became Christ, so we become Christians....What we have to consider in the elected man Jesus is, then, the destiny of human nature, its exaltation....But more, it is in this man that the exaltation itself is revealed and proclaimed. For with His decree concerning this man, God decreed too that this man should be the cause and instrument of our exaltation.

(C.D. II/2, p. 118)

Jesus Christ is not only the example of a man elected by grace, but it is in Him that all others are called and exalted by grace.



Thus it is not merely that Jesus Christ is who He is by grace alone. In His humanity it came about that grace overflowed for other men and their election of grace happens in Him. Barth unfolds this in three stages.

First, 'even as the object of predestination, even as elected man, Jesus Christ must still be understood as truly the beginning of all God's ways and works.'<sup>1</sup> The man Jesus had absolutely nothing to bring before God to make Him worthy of divine election.<sup>2</sup> That the man Jesus is the beginning of all God's ways and works, the first-born of all creation, is grace.<sup>3</sup> It is grace that the creation is posited in Him. It is grace in a yet more marvellous way that God gave Himself in union with the man Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> This is how 'the inner glory of God overflows. From all eternity it purports and wills its own impartation to the creature, the closest possible union with it, a fellowship which is not to its own advantage but to that of the creature.'<sup>5</sup> Thus the election of the creature is pure grace, and it is an election not simply by Christ, but in Him, i.e., in union with Him, with the grace of God which overflowed to men in Him. Election is participation in Jesus' creatureliness and sonship.<sup>6</sup> 'From its very source the election derives from the man Jesus.'<sup>7</sup>

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1. ibid., p. 120.

2. ibid., p. 121.

3. ibid., p. 121.

4. ibid., p. 121.

5. ibid., p. 121.

6. ibid., p. 121.

7. ibid., pp. 121-2.



Second, Barth says that the elected man Jesus was elected to suffer,<sup>1</sup> to be obedient to death. He fulfilled His election of grace in our humanity in space and time (and not in heaven!). It was ordained that He become flesh. But flesh is as grass and under divine condemnation. Therefore Jesus was elected to bear the divine rejection of sin and Satan. At the head and in place of all others He bore the rejection which should have been theirs.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in His death, in His willingness to obey to the end divine grace, He 'actualised the overflowing of the inner glory of God.'<sup>3</sup> In this way, the inner glory of God accomplished the decisive act of history. This act won the freedom of men. For in allowing the wrath of God to proceed against Him instead of against them, in checking the rule of Satan in His own person, the free course of divine justice brought them to freedom.<sup>4</sup> And, further, in His death for them, the Son of God brought about their death as sinners, and therefore

their radical sanctification, separation and purification for participation in a true creaturely independence, and more than that, for the divine sonship of the creature which is the grace for which from all eternity they are elected in the election of the man Jesus.  
(C.D. II/2, p. 125)

This second point may be summarised by saying that in the foreordination of the man Jesus to suffer, and in living out of that ordination to its end, He actualised in history the overflowing grace of God and so freed man from Satan

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1. ibid., p. 122.

2. ibid., p. 123.

3. ibid., pp. 125-6.

4. ibid., p. 123 and p. 125.

for participation in His sonship.

But, third, the divine purpose at the beginning of God's ways and acts reaches its completion - it accomplishes its purpose, its goal. In the first stage of unfolding the meaning of the election of the man Jesus, Barth said that from the beginning Jesus is the man He is by grace alone. In the second stage he said that in the man Jesus the glory of God overflowed in supreme grace to achieve the decisive act of history, i.e., the liberation of man from sin to participate in the sonship of Christ. This participation in Christ - and this is the main point of the third stage - is the 'goal', the 'end', the 'purpose' of the self-giving of the divine glory in the man Jesus;<sup>1</sup> it consists of the act of faith of men, of their concrete act of faith.<sup>2</sup> It means that since Jesus has put all rejection behind them 'they can have their own life.'<sup>3</sup> But the concrete act of faith and the life of the elect, precisely because they are a participation in Him, were first and primarily in Christ Himself. At this point it may seem that Barth is detracting from the point he has made about the concreteness and independence of the act of faith on the part of men other than Christ, but when it is seen what he means by this it will be seen that this is not so. In the second stage Barth pointed to the steadfast faithfulness of Jesus to the divine will, and now in this third stage he points to the mutual steadfastness of God and man in Jesus Christ:

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1. ibid., pp. 125-7: 'aim', p. 125; 'consummation', p. 126; 'end', p. 126.

2. ibid., p. 126.

3. ibid., p. 127.

'...in His mercy God remains just as faithful to Him as He in His readiness to do God's will remains faithful to God.'<sup>1</sup> In this 'twofold steadfastness' there is the being together of God and man, the setting up of the Kingdom of God 'as the consummation toward which all God's ways and acts are moving.'<sup>2</sup> On the human side, on the side of the Elect, this steadfastness meant prayer - obedience, calling on God in confidence in the righteousness of His will. Jesus counted on the steadfast faithfulness of the divine will toward Him and so obeyed God in prayerful trust in Him. In this trust and prayer and obedience He gave Himself up on the cross. He offered Himself in intercession as priest and victim for man. On God's part His steadfastness consisted in hearing the prayer of Jesus, in raising Him from the dead, and so vindicating Jesus' intercession for men and His own right to demand such obedience from Jesus. In His steadfast faithfulness to Jesus, God vindicated the righteousness of His assault against Satan, making 'manifest the vindication of His positive will as Creator against the assault of Satan, a vindication which He made by offering up His elect.' Barth says 'this divine and human steadfastness (reflected in the prayer and resurrection of Jesus) constitutes the meaning and purpose of the election of Jesus.'<sup>3</sup> If, then, the election of Jesus consisted concretely in His steadfast prayer to God, the prayer which God answered in a corresponding faithfulness

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1. ibid., p. 125.

2. ibid., p. 126.

3. ibid., p. 126.

to Him and so in vindicating His prayer in the sheer grace of raising Him from the dead, our election consists concretely of our faith (our prayer) in Him.<sup>1</sup> To put this comprehensively: if it is true that from the beginning Jesus is the One He is by grace alone, and if He realised that grace in history through His steadfast obedience, culminating in the prayer of priestly intercession for man on the cross, and if God for His part answered His prayer with the grace of raising Him from the dead, then our election of grace consists in a definite faith in Jesus on our part: it consists in having 'His resurrection and prayer both in the mind and in the heart.'<sup>2</sup> It consists in participation in Him, a genuine participation which does not detract from our faith and prayer but which claims nothing for itself and so in prayer looks only to the grace of God which is in the prayer and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This is only a brief outline of what Barth means by the grace of God in the humanity of Jesus Christ. Much more could have been noted, but the main thrust of his discussion as it has relevance for man's turning to God has been summarised. As always in the Dogmatics, Barth moves his solution of a theological problem towards its resolution in the being together of God and man. Here it is the being together of God and man in the mutual responsiveness and steadfastness of God and man each to each. This happens

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1. ibid., p. 126.

2. ibid., p. 127.



in Jesus Christ, but it happens in such a gracious way that it establishes the being together of God and the elect, God and men other than Jesus Christ. They are together in the Kingdom of God set up in Jesus Christ and which is Himself but which for that reason includes men who entrust themselves to God as freely and indeed independently for their own part as does Jesus Christ for His. Barth's sub-section on the eternal will of God deepens this theme.

Before proceeding with this task, it will be helpful to list some points which emerge from our summary of Barth's doctrine of Jesus Christ as both electing and elected, as they relate to the question of turning to God. 1. The goal of the eternal divine election is the act of man, his decision of faith. 2. Divine grace does not act on man irresistibly but calls forth prayer. In the human nature of Jesus Christ there is no question of an irresistible grace which causes obedience. He obeys in prayer. He can do nothing apart from the prayer which receives grace and in receiving obeys. 3. We are elect not by means of Christ, but in Christ. We are elect as we participate in Christ. This means that our election consists in having Jesus' prayer and resurrection in our heads and hearts, i.e., our election is not an automatic inclusion of ourselves in Him, but a genuine participation in Him. We need also to note that it is a participation in His humanity. As He lived His human life - by grace alone and therefore by the prayer which is called forth by, receives and obeys grace - so we live ours. 4. It was through the cross that Jesus effected the decisive act of history and so freed men to

participate in the overflowing of the divine glory, for which God determined Himself from the beginning and for which He also determined man. This means that at least in the logic of his theological position Barth is committed to the historical, even fleshly, achievement of election not in heaving<sup>en</sup> but on earth and in our humanity. How faithful Barth remains to this position is another matter, but there can be no doubt that the logic of his doctrine of election demands this concrete historical centre.

Barth's doctrine of the election of Jesus Christ establishes the ground for a thoroughgoing doctrine of the response of man to God. As we have seen, Barth insists that the steadfast obedience of Jesus Christ is essential to the election of man. At least in relation to the humanity of Jesus Christ, Barth gives us a strong Christian humanity. This humanity is no automaton but is freely and genuinely responsive to God and even has an autonomy. He lived out an obedience which was fulfilled in His self-offering on the cross and so also in prayer. As He was steadfastly obedient to the grace of God, so God was steadfastly faithful to Him. God responded to His prayer, raising Him from the dead. Thus Jesus' obedience was achieved entirely by grace (it was lived out in the prayer which, being completed on the cross, claimed nothing for itself and everything for the gracious God) yet it was His obedience and an obedience which God honoured and answered. It was this free, genuine obedience which God answered.

We meet at this point a pattern which we often find

in the Dogmatics, e.g., in the fragment on baptism.<sup>1</sup> Divine grace calls forth (but does not compel) a corresponding obedience in man. It is a genuine obedience, carried through by the human subject, for as Barth says in his account of 'real man', man posited by God in His grace is a subject who, as he is responsible to God, posits himself and does so in free activity.<sup>2</sup> His obedience is his own free act. But it is this only as it responds to God, as it is prayer. It can thus make no claim on God, yet it is a genuine human achievement which God graciously answers. For Jesus it meant the obedience to the cross, corresponding to the divine grace which called it forth, and the prayer which God answered by raising Him. For His followers it means obeying Jesus, corresponding to Him in baptism, and the prayer which baptism properly is and which God answers by saving us. It may be that here Barth has come close to an insight valued by Roman Catholic theology, though often expressed in an unacceptable form (e.g., doctrines of merit), i.e., the insight that the obedience which is prayer, and the prayer which is obedience, is a full, unconstricted human achievement which, while it makes no claim on God, God

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1. This is discussed briefly in Chapter XIII of this study.
  2. 'Man is the creature of God, and therefore posited by God....Hence man is also object. But he is subject too. A subject is something which freely posits itself in its own being. Man is, as he is responsible before God, as he knows and obeys and seeks after Him, and thus posits himself. Hence he is also subject.' C.D. III/2, p. 194. See also: '...whatever we may say about man for good or ill, we allude to man in his freedom, to man who is active subject in responsibility before God.' C.D. III/2, p. 195.

delights to honour and even to reward.<sup>1</sup>

### The Eternal Will of God

Barth's account of Jesus Christ as the electing God and as the Elected one, affirmed the essential role of the humanity of Christ in the election of other men. This is also true of his understanding of 'the eternal will of God in the election of Jesus Christ.'<sup>2</sup> Barth here gives an account of what in traditional theology is called the sovereignty of grace, but we shall note that the problem which so deeply troubled the earlier dogmatics, that of the relationship between the utter priority of grace and the freedom of men, is no longer a problem for Barth, since he shows that it is just this sovereignty of grace which makes men free.

The eternal will of God is revealed in Jesus Christ. It is a great mistake to look elsewhere, e.g., to a will of God preceding the election of grace in Jesus Christ. And yet this is just what traditional predestination theology did when it spoke of the eternal decrees hidden from man. Thus, in the traditional theories, the God who elects and the man elected are hidden in darkness. But, if Jesus Christ is both the electing God and the Elected man, we need no

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1. Cf., the remark of H.U. von Balthasar: 'I can understand how a Christian might not wish to consider the meritoriousness of his deeds before God, and yet, at the same time, I can believe that my worthless acts do merit a reward.' H.U. von Balthasar, The Theology of Karl Barth, trans. J. Drury (Doubleday, New York, 1972), p. 9.
  2. The title of the subsection now to be discussed, C.D. II/2, pp. 145-194.



longer be terrified by the idea that the God who elects and the man elected are in principle hidden from us. In Jesus Christ we are confronted by a mystery, not of darkness, but of light and of revelation.<sup>1</sup> In the face of Jesus Christ we know that the God who elects has revealed Himself as the One who has given Himself for man. We therefore know into whose hands we commit ourselves when we believe in election. Similarly, in the face of Jesus Christ we know who is elected - we know that he is the one for whom He has given Himself. Thus there is no need to look for evidence of election,<sup>2</sup> since in Jesus Christ we know the elected man and find our election directly in Him.

The eternal will of God is revealed in Jesus Christ. We therefore know that it is not a static or mechanical will, but a dynamically willed will which enters into encounter with human wills in time. It is not thereby a capricious will; it is not either undetermined or merely making a play-thing of men. This is so because God is constantly faithful with Himself and therefore faithful with man, and also because from the beginning, in His predestination, He has determined Himself for man.<sup>3</sup> Barth here makes an enormous advance on traditional predestination theology, for he has maintained a dynamic, personal, unceasingly responsive divine will, a will which enters into encounter with human wills in their present, without abandoning what the classical

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1. ibid., p. 146.

2. ibid., pp. 333-40.

3. ibid., p. 157.

theory held so precious, i.e., that God is not capricious because from the beginning He has had in mind the events of time. Predestination precedes all the contents of time.<sup>1</sup> But the predestination of God is the election of Jesus Christ, and therefore it is not a static plan that God executes in time, but the unfolding of the purpose in time which He resolved on before time in Jesus Christ, and which He realised in His person.

The eternal will of God revealed in Jesus Christ is His will to be wholly and utterly for men, even at the cost of giving Himself in His Son for the world. 'The eternal will of God in the election of Jesus Christ is His will to give Himself for the sake of man as created by Him and fallen from Him.'<sup>2</sup> This eternal will necessarily takes two forms, first God's determination of Himself, i.e., that God elected fellowship with man for Himself, and, second, His determination of man, i.e., that God elected fellowship with Himself for man.<sup>3</sup> The first form involved God in electing rejection for Himself. The unbelievably good thing happens that God elected danger, suffering and loss for Himself that He might have fellowship with man. In electing fellowship with man for Himself He must take on Himself the rejection of fallen man. By putting the matter this way, as he must in the face of the revelation of the eternal will of God in Jesus Christ, Barth gives the lie

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1. ibid., p. 155.

2. ibid., p. 161.

3. ibid., p. 162.

to those ideas of predestination which describe God's good-pleasure as His will to choose some men and reject others.<sup>1</sup> In Jesus Christ we know that God's will is wholly good toward men because He has given Himself for them. The notion that there is an equilibrium in God whereby He takes pleasure in balancing the elect and the reprobate makes God uncompassionate and indifferent. It is to be resisted with all the might of which we are capable.<sup>2</sup> In Jesus Christ it is clear that God's will is not both election and rejection (not both Yes and No), but wholly election. There must be and is rejection, but this rejection falls wholly on Himself.<sup>3</sup> Thus, God's good-pleasure in election is not a complacent decision, but His good-pleasure from the beginning to determine Himself for and actually to bear man's rejection. There is indeed double predestination, election and rejection, but it is not the fearful apportioning of blessing and reprobation among men, but the joyful truth that God bears the rejection and man receives blessedness.

Double predestination is a matter for unbounded rejoicing. God does not will good and bad for man; He wills only good. There is a sense in which evil has to be, but we cannot properly say that God wills evil, for how can we say of the God revealed in Jesus Christ that He wills what is not good? God gives evil its place only for man's

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1. ibid., pp. 171-4.

2. ibid., p. 171.

3. ibid., pp. 166-8.

good, only that He might overcome it in His own person and so secure for man the blessedness He has from the beginning willed for man. Indeed, evil exists only in order that the divine glory may overflow to man:

God wills evil only because He wills not to keep to Himself the light of His glory but to let it shine outside Himself, because He wills to ordain man the witness of His glory.  
(C.D. II/2, p. 170).

It is in the Son of God that this glory overflows to man, that evil is checked and that man is established a witness to this glory. This means 'sacrificial love', the humiliation of the Son of God,<sup>1</sup> the overflowing of the divine glory in supreme and costly love. In this way the evil which has to be serves the divine glory and man's salvation. The judgment falls on Christ in order that man may share His glory. This 'is clearly the decisive element in the work of God accomplished in Jesus Christ and therefore in God's eternal decree.'<sup>2</sup> The negative side of predestination falls on Jesus Christ; it has its place only that man might be exalted by God. Double predestination thus need no longer inspire both terror and joy,<sup>3</sup> but, as we see its revelation in Jesus Christ, 'we can only rejoice at the double predestination of God.'<sup>4</sup>

In Jesus Christ, this eternal will of God enters into relationship with men in history. This is of considerable importance for the question of man's turning to God, since it means that there is mutual responsiveness between the

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1. ibid., p. 173.

2. ibid., p. 173.

3. ibid., p. 174.

4. ibid., p. 174.



divine and human wills. It means that the double predestination which affects all men also has its working out in the personal encounter between Jesus Christ and all men. (Barth is careful to avoid anything which in any sense suggests synergism or that there are two sources of election, the divine and the human will. Rather, he shows that there is a divine precedence, an absolute sovereignty, which frees the human will for encounter with it). Because the eternal will of God is identical with the election of Jesus Christ, 'it is a divine activity in the form of the history, encounter and decision between man and God.'<sup>1</sup> This must be said because, first of all, God has His being in Himself in decision. ('In Himself God is rest, but this does not exclude but rather includes the fact that His being is decision.'<sup>2</sup>) This is the decision in which He is who He is. But, second, this means His decision to be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore that 'from all eternity God posits His whole majesty...in this particular relationship to this particular being over against Himself. God pledges and commits Himself to be the God of man.'<sup>3</sup> 'This is the activity of God in predestination insofar as He is its Subject.'<sup>4</sup> But there is also a fulfilment (Vollzug)<sup>5</sup> of this predestination. It is

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1. ibid., p. 175. ('Geschichte, Begegnung und Entscheidung', K.D. II/2, p. 192).

2. ibid., p. 175.

3. ibid., p. 177.

4. ibid., p. 177.

5. K.D. II/2, p. 194.

begun in 'the history, encounter, decision'<sup>1</sup> between God and man in Jesus Christ and fulfilled in 'the affirmation of the existence of elected man and its counterpart in man's election, in which God's election evokes and awakens faith, and meets and answers that faith as human decision.'<sup>2</sup> It is really true that 'for his part man can and actually does elect God, thus attesting and activating Himself as elected man.'<sup>3</sup> In accepting the self-giving of God in this two-fold sense (i.e., as the evocation of faith and as God's answer to this faith) man has the basis for his own life. In this sense Barth speaks of 'a simple but comprehensive autonomy of the creature.'<sup>4</sup> It is precisely because of the sovereignty of the divine initiative ('the One who elects has absolute autonomy over the one elected';<sup>5</sup> 'All that man can do is to pray, to follow, and to obey.'<sup>6</sup>) that man has an autonomy of his own:

[God] wills and fulfils and reveals Himself not only in Himself but in giving Himself, in willing and recognising the distinct reality of the creature, granting and conceding to it an individual and autonomous place side by side with Himself.

(C.D. II/2, p. 178).

This does not mean, of course, that the creature has an 'independent' individuality - that could only be devilish and a caricature. But from all eternity God has willed

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 177.

2. *ibid.*, p. 177. H. Küng, *Justification*, trans. T. Collins, E.E. Tolk and D. Grandkou (Burns and Oates, London, 1964), p. 18, draws attention to the human decision as the goal of the divine decision in Barth.

3. *ibid.*, p. 177.

4. *ibid.*, p. 177.

5. *ibid.*, p. 177.

6. *ibid.*, p. 177.

to give Himself for man and therefore to give the creature an autonomy and an individuality which, far from rivalling His sovereignty, confirms and glorifies it.<sup>1</sup>

That the sovereignty of God means no threat to man's autonomy has all too rarely been understood in the history of theology and it has been particularly obscured in modern Western culture where man's autonomy has been imagined to consist in his independence from God. It has been thought that man has autonomy either apart from God or in his innate strength to turn to God - in both cases man's autonomy and God's sovereignty have been conceived of as being in conflict. It is worth hearing Barth at some length on this sovereignty of God which establishes man's autonomy:

...the sovereignty [of God] which was to be confirmed and glorified [by man] was the sovereignty of His love, which did not will to exercise mechanical force,...but willed rather to triumph in faithful servants and friends, not in their overthrow but in their obedience, in their own free decision for Him. The purpose and meaning of the eternal divine election of grace consists in the fact that the one who is elected from all eternity can and does elect God in return.

(C.D. II/2, p. 178).

Since the sovereignty of God, as the sovereignty of love, does not seek to manipulate man but to do him good, the prayer of man corresponds to it.

The man Jesus is not a mere puppet moved this way and that by God. He is not a mere reed used by God as the instrument of His Word. The man Jesus prays. He speaks and acts. (C.D. II/2, p. 178)

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1. ibid., p. 178.



It is to be noted that prayer is in its very nature obedience to God - it corresponds to Him - and it is therefore also speech and action. It is the receiving of grace and therefore obedient action in which man attains his maturity as an acting subject. This is true because 'the perfection of God's giving Himself to man', which is received in prayer:

consists in the fact that far from merely playing with man, far from merely moving him or using him, far from merely dealing with him as an object, this self-giving sets man up as a subject, awakens him to individuality and autonomy, frees him, makes him a king, so that in his rule the kingly rule of God Himself attains form and revelation.

(C.D. II/2, p. 179)

This is the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom realised in Jesus Christ and so also the Kingdom in which we are, in Him, established as kings. The goal of this divine sovereignty is the autonomy of man.

God's eternal will is man: man who is the whole-hearted witness to God's kingdom and enjoys as such a kingly freedom...man in the state of utter and most abject responsibility over against God, who even in this responsibility, even in this acknowledgment of the absolute pre-eminence of God Himself, is and becomes an individual, and autonomous, and in the sphere of creation a sovereign being, and as such the image of God. God's eternal will is the act of prayer (in which confidence in self gives way before confidence in God). (C.D. II/2, pp. 179-80.)

The problem of God's sovereignty and man's autonomy is solved by Barth in seeing the encounter between God and man for what it is: prayer, the fellowship of man with God which God from the beginning has willed for man and for which He gave Himself in Christ. The eternal will of God thus finds its goal in man's act of prayer. Barth can thus say quite simply that man's election of God is the goal of election:



...the decision of the sovereign God, His election of grace (in the understanding of which we cannot be allowed to reverse or even compare the two partners), has as its sole content the fact that God elects man in order that man may be awakened and summoned to elect God, and to pray that he may give himself to Him, and that in this act of electing and prayer he may exist in freedom before God...

(C.D. II/2, p. 180).

Traditional accounts of predestination were unable to affirm that the goal of divine election is man's corresponding election of God. Barth's position is an immense gain also for modern thought since, as was argued in Chapter I of this study, modern man wants to believe that he can choose God in his own strength and live on his own feet before Him. Barth concedes nothing to the Pelagianism of this desire, but he does give man a freedom and a responsibility, an authentic maturity, which traditional predestination theology could not. Even Calvin, with his deep interest in man (as evidenced especially in his Christology), gave little emphasis to man's election of God.<sup>1</sup> Barth has shown that to live by grace alone is to become of age, to become autonomous. He is quite an anti-Pelagian as Calvin, but he finds he must speak of man electing God. This is because the sovereign will of God, His grace, is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was fully obedient to the divine will and was fully recipient of divine grace. He was a man of prayer.

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1. Calvin does say that man's faith 'confirms' divine election (Institute, III, 24, 3), but he does not stress man's decision as the goal of God's decision. In this respect, Barth strengthens and develops Calvin.

His humanity was in no sense circumscribed by God's will and grace, but rather opened up and established by them. In this way, He was the realisation of the Kingdom of God. Other men enter this full humanity of Christ as they live in Him, as they live in prayer, and participate in His prayer. It is in this prayer that men acknowledge the sovereignty of God's grace and that they are free to elect and actually do elect God. As they live in the Kingdom of God realised in Jesus Christ, they also are kings.

It is clear that at least in the logic of his theology Barth gives a necessary and adequate place to the turning of men to God. We will have to ask in the following discussions of his development of the doctrine of election whether he has adequately understood the connection between the turning of man to God in Christ and the participation of other men in that turning.

#### The Election of Men Other than Jesus Christ

We now come to Barth's understanding of the election of men other than Jesus Christ. Barth does not immediately speak of other individuals who are elect because he notes that Holy Scripture is in no hurry to reach them.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that God by-passes the election of individuals,<sup>2</sup> but that the Bible first thinks of 'the human fellowship which in a particular way provisionally forms the natural and historical environment of the man Jesus Christ'.<sup>3</sup>

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 195; cf. p. 306.

2. ibid., p. 310.

3. ibid., p. 196.

As this human environment, the community mediates the election of Jesus Christ to the individual.<sup>1</sup> We shall follow Barth, and discuss the election of the community before the election of the individual. We will not examine the section 'The Election of the Community' in detail, but will show the way in which Barth understands the community to mediate the election of God to the individual.

The Christian community is not a Mediator: Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between man and God. Yet the mediation of the community has an essential part in the election by God of men. The community is not itself the object of divine election: individual men are.<sup>2</sup> Yet it is not as private persons<sup>3</sup> that they are elect but 'as a fellowship elected by God in Jesus Christ...for a peculiar service, to be made capable of this service and to discharge it'.<sup>4</sup> As private individuals men serve themselves, but as the elect of God they serve others. The elect individual lives for himself no more than does the elect community live for itself. The individual is elected by God into the fellowship of the community, and it is by the witness of the community that He calls the individual. Thus, the individual is called to abandon his private life and live

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1. ibid., p. 196; cf. pp. 323-5.

2. ibid., p. 313.

3. ibid., p. 196.

4. ibid., p. 196.



as an elect person, as a witness to the truth which the community mediated to him. The individual serves the truth, just as the community serves the truth and as did Jesus Christ also. Election in God, in Jesus Christ, in the community and in the individual is service.

Barth's understanding of the service of the community must be examined carefully since it is this notion which leads many readers of the Dogmatics to believe that Barth is committed, in the logic of his theology, to the salvation of all men.<sup>1</sup> This problem is important for this study as it may be that the logic of Barth's position means that men are turned to God whether they will or not, without their willing participation.

The problem may be located in this way. Barth accompanies his theological account of the election of the community with an exegesis of Romans 9-11, the passage which climaxes its argument with the words: 'For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all'. (11, 32). Whatever rejection there is serves only election,

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1. Though Barth explicitly repudiates the doctrine of apokatastasis ('to the man who persistently tries to change the truth into untruth, God does not owe eternal patience...' (C.D. IV/3, p. 477)), he is clearly tempted by it. See, e.g., ibid., pp. 477-8; The Humanity of God trans. J.N. Thomas (Collins, London, 1961), pp. 61-2. See also the carefully formulated opinion of H. Hartwell, The Theology of Karl Barth (Duckworth, London, 1964), pp. 110-2. Hartwell thinks that the movement of Barth's theology is toward universalism, though he recognises that he denies that theology may teach it. The article of J.N. Bettis, 'Is Barth a Universalist?', Scottish Journal of Theology, XV (1967), pp. 423-36 argues that Barth's understanding of God's freedom prevents him, even in the logic of his theology, from holding a universalist position.



serves only mercy on all. This universal mercy is worked out among men in the history of the community. God has acted in the very disobedience of men so that He may have mercy on all men. Parallel with this Barth concludes the theological argument by saying:

Though waiting for Israel's conversion, [the Church] cannot and will not hesitate to precede Israel with the confession of the unity of God's community, the unity of the man who, according to the will of the divine mercy, both passes and comes in the person of Him who has suffered death for all and brought life to light for all. (C.D. II/2, p. 276)

This does not as such mean universal salvation but the logic is clear: through the act of God in the One who has died and been raised for all, there can be no passing of man which does not finally serve the coming of man. This is said of the community, but does not the same hold for the individual? Does it not mean that there is no passing of the individual which does not mean his coming, and therefore the salvation of all individuals?

In fact, the entire argument of the chapter 'The Election of God' makes this question inevitable. A brief recapitulation of the movement of this chapter will show both the glory and the problem of its argument.

The election of God is His will from all eternity not to be Himself without also electing man. This involves double predestination. The rejection which men deserved fell on Jesus Christ so that they may have fellowship with God and share His glory.

The entire will of God for man is His will to send forth His glory so that men may share in it. Even evil has its place only for this purpose, only that the light of God's glory may shine in all its glory and bring man to share

in it as its witness. In this eternal will of God there is therefore a judgment of evil, and men are determined by God to witness to this judgment. Men are caught up in the shadow side of reality, and there is a sense in which they are destined to become its victims. God certainly does not will men to evil and to judgment, but in the overflow of His glory for the good of man there is also this shadow which exists only that man might be rescued from it and become witnesses to His judgment of it. In other words, the eternal will of God to send forth His glory for the salvation of man means also that man must be involved in the shadow side of reality, must witness to God's judgment of it and must also be determined for judgment in order that he may be determined for salvation.

The central point here is the divine will to display the riches of the divine glory to man for man's good. Evil and the judgment of evil therefore have to have a place, for only in this way can the full riches of the divine glory be displayed for man. (This does not mean that the fall of man was willed by God - human evil is man's responsibility. Man's self-involvement in the shadow cast by the divine glory in his own utterly inexcusable doing.) But this 'place' of evil exists only in order that the divine self-giving may overcome it. Man's self-involvement in evil, and therefore his determination to serve the judgment of God, his hearing but not obeying the Word and his passing form as sinner - all this has its place only that it may serve the eternal divine will to overflow in glory for man. That evil and God's judgment of it has this 'place' is clearly seen in Jesus Christ.

From all eternity God has willed to give Himself,<sup>1</sup> to impart Himself in 'a fellowship which is not to [His] own advantage but to that of the creature.'<sup>2</sup> But this also meant that

from all eternity judgment had been forseen - even in the overflowing of God's inner glory, even in the ineffable condescension of God's embracing of the creature, even in the fulness of self-giving by which God Himself wills to become a creature. For teleologically the election of the man Jesus carries within itself the election of a creation which is good according to the positive will of God....But this involves necessarily the rejection of Satan, the rebel angel who is the very sum and substance of the possibility which is not chosen by God....Satan ...is the shadow which accompanies the light of the election of Jesus Christ....And in the divine counsel the shadow itself is necessarily the object of rejection....The rejection which all men incurred.... God in His love for men transfers from all eternity to Him in whom He loves and elects them.

(C.D. II/2, pp. 122-3)

Rejection therefore has a necessary place, but the necessity of its place is that of serving the election.

The eternal will of God to give Himself for man's good had its realisation in history. It meant above all the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As this historical event, in which the utter self-giving of God coincided with the perfect self-involvement of men in evil, it was the event in which God displayed the riches of His mercy, in which He made His judgment serve His mercy. In the flesh of the Son of God He overruled man's unbelief, represented in Israel, and established the believing community, the Church. Jesus made unbelief and the divine

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 121.

2. ibid., p. 121.



rejection of unbelief serve belief and the divine election.

These two communities (Israel and the Church) witness to the purpose, the teleology, of the divine judgment of grace. They are distinguished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Israel handed Him over and the Church accepted Him. But although in this unbelief of Israel and this belief of the Church we have the attitude and action of men, we have also the determination of God. For in His election (as we have seen) God willed that there should be an overcoming of the rejected evil in order that there should be a sharing by man in the superabounding grace of God. There is therefore a determination of the first form of the community (Israel) to represent this judgment of evil, to attest this judgment by handing over the Messiah. But through the resurrection of the Son there is a determination of the second form of the community (the Church) to represent the mercy of God, to attest this mercy by accepting the Son. In the purpose of God it thus came about that the election of Israel was fulfilled in the new Israel, the Church. The determination of Israel to represent the divine judgment served to bring about the determination of the Church to represent the mercy of God. In this way the teleology of the divine judgment of grace was achieved, since even the sin of man represented in the apostacy of Israel served, through the act of God in Christ, the salvation of man as represented in the Church.

In this sense the distinction between Israel and the Church is seen as a kind of dialectical distinction within the one elect community of God. Through the cross and



resurrection of Christ, unbelieving Israel becomes believing Israel and the passing form of man becomes the coming form. Unbelieving Israel is completely passed over: this is no Hegelian self-sacrifice in view of a self-transformation, a self-refinement of an essentially good and only apparently bad community, but Israel is passed over in such a way that the coming form waits to include converted Israel in the new community, the new Israel (cf. Rom. 11). Thus even the separation of Israel and Church serves the inclusion of both in the one new community.

This recapitulation of Barth's chapter on the 'Election of God', up to the section on the 'Election of the Individual', shows that in Barth all rejection serves the purpose of election. In relation to the whole movement of election within history and within the community there can be little doubt that Barth is correct,<sup>1</sup> but it is very doubtful whether this is true in relation to the individual, i.e., whether all unbelief in individuals is made to serve the salvation of those individuals. Barth, it is true, does not base his understanding of individual election on the abstract principle that all unbelief serves election. But he believes that in the concrete life of Jesus Christ all rejection must serve election. Does not this then mean that he comes very close to believing that all men are to be saved, irrespective of their own election of God?<sup>2</sup>

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1. Cf. the judgment of C. O'Grady, The Church in Catholic Theology (G. Chapman, London, 1969), p. 30.

2. This problem is raised in a particularly acute form by Barth's treatment of Judas. C.D. II/2, pp. 458ff.

We must now turn to Barth's account of the election of the individual with this question in mind.

### The Election of the Individual

In this last stage of our discussion of Barth's account of election, we will find ourselves diverging from him, not in relation to his (biblical) idea that, through the crucifixion of Christ, man's rebellion is made to serve salvation, but that there is a rebellion which, while it witnesses to the election which it rejects, is not unsaved. We will find ourselves maintaining against Barth that there is a damnation which, as damnation and continuing as damnation, witnesses to the victory of divine election. If the love of God shed abroad in the election of God is as complete as Barth (correctly) maintains, surely a rejection of that love, because it is a rejection of perfect love, is utter dereliction.

Barth is well aware of this kind of objection to his argument. In fact, what we have just noted in the preceding paragraph about the nature of the dereliction forms the backbone of his thesis about the rejected.<sup>1</sup> Against traditional predestination theory he points out that the sting of rejection is not that God has not elected a person, but precisely that God has elected him.<sup>2</sup> The intolerable

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1. C.D. II/2, pp.449-458.

2. 'A "rejected" man is one who isolates himself from God by resisting his election....God is for him; but he is against God.' (my italics), ibid., p. 449. Cf. 'The man who is isolated over and against God is as such rejected by God. But to be this man can only be by the godless man's own choice.' ibid., p. 306.

nature of the rejection comes from its being the rejection of love freely given to it. In this respect Barth's account of reprobation is far more perceptive than that of the traditional teachers. Traditional predestination theology, for all its correctness in seeing the terror of reprobation in its being a rejection by God, took the sting out of reprobation by not seeing that what God reprobated is the isolation from His burning love, His all-embracing election.<sup>1</sup> Barth has seen the real sting of reprobation. It is the unaccountable, personal self-isolation<sup>2</sup> of a man from the fellowship with God for which God has determined him and for which God has determined Himself, and therefore also a man's rejection by God. (This by no means implies that man takes the initiative in election; rather it means that the sting of reprobation consists in the rejection of the preventing love of God, the love in which God elects even the man who rejects it.)

Where, then, is our problem with Barth? It is that he holds that divine grace is stronger than man (as it certainly is) in such a way that there can be no final resistance to it.<sup>3</sup> There is a sense in which we must agree

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1. Two things need to be noted here. 1. Traditional predestination theory was correct in seeing the sting of reprobation in its being a rejection by God. God rejects sinners, His face is against them; but 2. traditional predestination doctrine robbed reprobation of its worst sting by saying that God never elected these men, and thus that it was not by their own most grievous fault that they are rejected. The infinite regret and self-reproach of damnation was thus lost.
  2. 'Without the Holy Spirit, and therefore without their calling, they [the elect] would necessarily be the same as the others in all respects in which they are distinguished from them.' ibid., p. 348.
  3. ibid., p. 453.

with Barth on even this point: the rejected, as Barth points out, witness to the victory of divine grace in that it is the victory of divine grace that they are rejecting. Further, we must hold with Barth that it is exactly as true of the elect as of the rejected that they resist and isolate themselves from divine grace. It is precisely this rejection of the victory of divine grace which God overcomes in the elect.<sup>1</sup> The same gracelessness which damns the rejected is overcome by grace in the elect. Barth must surely be correct in arguing that God's grace overcomes man's gracelessness, and that man's self-isolation from God is not victorious over against God's gracious decision for man. But Barth holds that there can be no final rejection of the divine election.<sup>2</sup> It is this which is so disturbing - because grace would no longer be grace if there were not that in it which did not require the response of man, the response which he can withhold, although by withholding it he remains utterly unfree, a slave. Has not Barth done with the understanding of grace what the traditional teachers did? - i.e., where they thought of an infallible turning to God of the limited number of the elect (and of the infallible and irresistible turning of all the

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1. ibid., p. 452.

2. 'The fact that, in all its wickedness and deadliness, the attempt [of the godless to oppose the divine election of grace] is powerless in the face of God's will and decree means that it is only conditionally and not unconditionally that it can lack this distinction [i.e., election], or, stated positively, that they can be 'rejected'. A limit is set by the fact that the rejected man, who alone and truly takes and bears and bears away the wrath of God, is called Jesus Christ. They can be only potentially rejected.' ibid., p. 349.



elect), Barth now thinks of an infallible turning of all the elect, who in his theology are not a limited number but the open number which may well be all men (although Barth denies that it is all men)?<sup>1</sup> Despite Barth's excellent and much needed refinement and precision of perception into the doctrine of the power of grace, has he not retained a residue of the old notion of irresistible grace? He has pointed out that his theology does not speak of a triumph of grace but with the personal presence of Jesus the Victor.<sup>2</sup> This is an immense gain for theology, but it may be doubted whether he uses his insight here as richly as he might. If grace is the personal presence of Jesus, who says: 'You have not chosen me, I have chosen you', are we not obliged to say that the personal response of the ones chosen (and we may very well agree that this is every man) is essential? For if grace by-passed the personal response of men, how could it be the personal call of Jesus?

Let us now see what Barth understands by the election of the individual. As we proceed it will be clear that at no point does Barth lose sight of the fact that it is the grace of Jesus with which we have to do, nor does he forget that grace is stronger than man's gracelessness (because it is entirely directed to man for his good, i.e., it is entirely gracious). If we dissent from Barth in the final count, it will not be because we are returning to the traditional position, but because we believe that his theology needs to

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1. see ibid., p. 417; esp. pp. 421-2 and p. 476.

2. C.D. IV/3, pp. 174-5.

complete its insight into the graciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the message which the elect community addresses to the individual? It is good news, addressed to the individual who isolates himself over against God and is godless. This individual has made an utterly graceless choice.<sup>1</sup> Having made this decision the individual has ruined his authentic individuality.<sup>2</sup> His life is futile and under the divine condemnation, destined for perdition. To this individual the community addresses the good news that Jesus Christ has borne his rejection and that therefore he can no longer bear it.<sup>3</sup> To this individual, ruined by his own decision, the community witnesses to the superior divine decision of grace executed in Jesus Christ. As this divine decision, his decision is nullified, cancelled. (His decision was in any case futile. This does not mean that it was not desperately serious and in fact deserved damnation, but that it was impotent to destroy God's good-will toward the sinner.) He can persist in his rebellion, but he cannot reverse the divine decision which stands above him and surrounds him. If he persists in sin, he can only repeat sins already forgiven. He cannot undo the divine decision regarding him.<sup>4</sup> But he can accept it. He can allow the divine

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 346.

2. ibid., pp. 315-8. Since man's individuality consists in his being loved wholly, undividedly, by God (p.314), to reject God is to gamble away his true individuality for mere individualism.

3. ibid., p. 319.

4. 'He cannot change or reverse the eternal decision of God...', ibid., p. 317.

decision which has made him elect in his being become also the grace by which he lives. He now lives his election, lives his election which is not in himself but in Jesus Christ. This transition - i.e., from being elect merely in his being to living his election - takes place in his decision.<sup>1</sup> It is not, of course, his decision which cancels out his previous disastrous decision: only Jesus Christ can do that. It is the decision to live by the decision of God which has cancelled out his evil decision.

It is thus clear that Barth's understanding of the election of the individual includes evangelism.<sup>2</sup> The elect community proclaims the good-news of the divine decision in favour of the individual, and urgently addresses him personally and directly to decide on the basis of this divine decision.<sup>3</sup>

Barth does not neglect the transition from the ungracious individual to the elect individual. It is a movement which, while it does not depend on his decision, does not take place without it. Barth speaks eloquently of the preaching of election to the individual. Election is properly preached only when it is an address and a summons to each particular man -thou- to live his own life by the

1. 'Between the being of the elect and his life as such there lies the event and the decision of the reception of the promise.' ibid., p. 321.
2. ibid., pp. 323-5. H.Ü. von Balthasar, op.cit., p. 150, stresses the mission of the Church in Barth's doctrine of election.
3. 'Jesus Christ died and rose for thee. It is thou who art elect with Him and through Him. And now that all this has been said to thee, it is the event of what thou for any part shalt say and do (or not say and not do), which decides whether the ancient curse will again be laid on thee with what is said, or whether the eternal blessing will come upon thee with utter newness.' (C.D. II/2, p. 324).

divine decision.

Yet it must be asked of even this section whether there is not a mitigation of the seriousness of the human decision. This individual is certainly according to Barth the object of the whole eternal divine predestination:

because God is One; because His eternal Son, the only-begotten, the beginning of all His ways and works, is the One on whom God wholly (individua) bestows His love; because in this One He has made Himself the God of mankind; because in this One He has called man His son - therefore it is the individual (that is, this or that single man) to whom God's deity for men and God's condescension to men (in time and for all eternity) refer.  
(C.D. II/2, p. 314)

Nor is there any doubt that it is the decision of this individual to whom predestination refers:

The purpose and meaning of the eternal divine election of grace consists in the fact that the one who is elected from all eternity can and does elect God in return. (C.D. II/2, p. 178)

But the seriousness of this decision is mitigated by the fact that he is already elect in his being before he lives as an elect man. His salvation does not therefore need his decision.<sup>1</sup>

Barth holds this because he is concerned to uphold the perfection of the divine decision. It is superior to man's graceless decision and the only choice open to man is that of repeating God's gracious choice for him.

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1. cf. C. O'Grady, op.cit., p. 32; C.S. Duthie, 'Ultimate Triumph', Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1961):

'The failure of Barth to acknowledge that the human self is genuinely involved, without thereby acquiring merit, in its own salvation by virtue of its God-given, responsible freedom, makes it easier for him...to speak of this great decision as having already been taken by God in that self-revelation in Christ which is both election and reconciliation.'



Further, it means that a man is already elect in his being before he lives as an elect man,<sup>1</sup> since Jesus Christ has made this decision for all men. Yet surely the perfection and the power of the divine decision do not save a man without his response to it, without his willing participation. With Barth we must agree that the divine decision is superior to man, that it does take place without any co-operation whatever on his part and that man can only repeat the decision made on his behalf, but against Barth we must say that, precisely because this divine decision is perfectly for man it does not save him until he allows it to have effect in him, until he confirms it and participates in it. To put this more positively: the divine decision is so graceful, so courteous, that its perfection does not reach its goal and so save man until it has brought man to answer to it, to respond to it with his own decision. We dissent from Barth only because the divine decision is more perfect, more powerful in its grace, than Barth describes.

We must leave further consideration of this superior divine decision to the next chapter, and for the present pursue Barth's account of the election of the individual and his decision.

What is it that makes individuals elected? Barth holds that they are elect not because of anything in themselves, nor is their election a matter of necessity or chance. That they are who they are depends solely on the freedom of God to be the One He is.<sup>2</sup> (Cf. Paul's: 'by the grace of God

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1. 'The community recognises and attests the being of man - every man - in Jesus Christ.' (C.D. II/2, p. 321).

2. ibid., p. 343.

I am what I am.' (I Cor. 15: 10). It is 'the individuality and solitude of God which constitutes the elect individual.'<sup>1</sup> Barth then argues that 'to this distinction, peculiar to the elect, of God's relationship to them and their relationship to Him, there corresponds objectively their difference from other men.'<sup>2</sup> This calling is not an end in itself, since it involves their faith and their proclamation of the good news to others, their witness to the truth of election. Of other men it cannot be said that they are the men they are by a particular determination of God toward them.<sup>3</sup> They refuse with hostility the goodness of God offered to them;<sup>4</sup> they refuse the goodness of God and lack faith in Him, and they refuse the truth of their election and therefore are false witnesses. They reach back to a life which God has made 'objectively impossible',<sup>5</sup> since Jesus Christ has cancelled out the life of unbelief. But though it is objectively impossible, their rejection is 'evil', 'dangerous' and 'futile'. It exists only as a lie against the truth, as a lie against the truth that 'there is only one Rejected, the Bearer of all man's sin and guilt, and their ensuing punishment, and this One is Jesus Christ.'<sup>6</sup>

The difference between the elect and others is this: the elect witness to the truth of the election of all men in

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1. ibid., p. 343.

2. ibid., p. 345.

3. ibid., p. 346.

4. ibid., p. 346.

5. ibid., p. 346.

6. ibid., p. 346.

Jesus Christ whereas the others lie against it.<sup>1</sup> The difference does not reside in the eternal decrees but springs from the eternal will of God to elect all men in Jesus Christ. If this is so, there is a 'solidarity'<sup>2</sup> between the elect and others, i.e., the election of all in Jesus Christ. This means that there is for the elect a 'definite recollection' that their rejection has been passed over in Jesus Christ and therefore a freedom to witness to the election of the others in Him, and that there is for the rejected a very definite expectation that Jesus Christ has borne their rejection also.

It is only in relation to the humanity of Jesus Christ that we see what this distinction and solidarity is.<sup>3</sup> He is the 'Elect individual', and it is 'in virtue of this fact' that the others are elect, i.e., elect in Him, 'included in His election.'<sup>4</sup> The elect are 'His community'.<sup>5</sup> Every individual would be rejected if it were not that Jesus Christ has taken this rejection upon Himself, and thereby removed it.<sup>6</sup> The elect are elect only because of the election of Jesus Christ and His calling them into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is in this sense that He is 'the Elect, apart from whom there are no others but only the rejected.'<sup>7</sup>

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1. ibid., p. 346.

2. ibid., p. 347.

3. ibid., p. 351.

4. ibid., p. 351.

5. ibid., p. 351.

6. ibid., p. 351.

7. ibid., p. 352.

Therefore the elect are seen, recognised as elect, only in relation to the Elect One; and they are recognised as those who were rejected but whose rejection has been rejected in the rejection of Jesus Christ. Indeed, in themselves they are rejected, but in Jesus Christ, the Elect One, they are elect. Similarly, it is only in the 'portrait'<sup>1</sup> of Jesus Christ that we see who a rejected man is. It is 'Jesus Christ who is cast out of the presence of God' and 'delivered to eternal death.'<sup>2</sup> If there are other men who are rejected it is only by 'misunderstanding and disregard'<sup>3</sup> of the fact that He alone is truly rejected. But He is the Rejected only because He is the Elect.<sup>4</sup> This gives the rejected and the elect an extraordinary proximity in their distinction. Their mutual opposition finds its necessity in Him<sup>5</sup> as does also their unity in their opposition. Both testify to Him, the one negatively, the other positively. There is even a sense in which the elect and the reject 'exchange their functions.'<sup>6</sup> 'Where God exalts there is also humiliation. And where He still strikes He has not yet cast aside.'<sup>7</sup> This is the way God loves us in His Son.

If the proper object of His love is no other 'individual' than this One, then apart from this One there can be no other who can be consumed by the fire of His love which is the wrath of God. It is the function of the many

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1. ibid., p. 352.

2. ibid., p. 352.

3. ibid., p. 352.

4. ibid., p. 352.

5. ibid., p. 353.

6. ibid., p. 354.

7. ibid., p. 354.



elect and the many rejected to indicate this love of God in its twofold nature. And the authorisation under which the latter stand as well as the former is to live - in their differing functions - by the fact that God has loved and loves and will love this One, and them also in Him. (C.D. II/2, p. 354)

This is the meaning of the election and reprobation of men as revealed in Jesus Christ. It is as if, to use an analogy Barth does not use, the whole universe of men is like a diamond reflecting the true light Jesus Christ - the elect refracting His election, the rejected refracting His reprobation. In hymning this perfection of divine love, Barth stands very close to the Christian mystics. Central to the argument of the passage quoted at the end of the preceding paragraph is the perception that even the wrath of God is the fire of His love. All men are held by and are responsible to the love of God, and for all men His love is the fire of wrath against sin and the fire of purification. Unlike the mystics, Barth argues this not from experience as such but from Jesus Christ. He grounds it solely on Jesus Christ, the Elect One. With them Barth sees the distinction between the elect and rejected in their acceptance of the truth or their lying against it: the elect and rejected become, as it were, antitheses of each other. Barth interprets this to mean that the elect and rejected have a kind of solidarity, while the mystics see the rejected as existing in a most dreadful plight precisely because of their relationship to God, and it greatly increases the urgency of their intercession for the world.<sup>1</sup> This is mentioned at this point because we will later ask why Barth and the Christian mystics use a similar,

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1. see, e.g. Catherine of Siena, Dialogue, trans. A. Thorold, (Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., London, 1907), pp. 70-3.

even identical, insight and yet reach a different attitude toward the conversion of men.

We have seen that it is only in the light of Jesus Christ that we see the distinction (and the solidarity) of the elect and the rejected. We will now see that the meaning of being elect is found in Him.

A man is elect with a purpose<sup>1</sup> and for service. To be elect means to be a member of the Christian community. An elect man is loved by God and determined for blessedness,<sup>2</sup> but this blessedness, precisely because it is the overflowing of God toward man, is not only a receiving but especially an opening up for use in the service of God's self-glorification.<sup>3</sup> God elects man and gives Himself for him in order that he may give himself in gratitude to God. Specifically this gratitude means the service of a life which 'corresponds'<sup>4</sup> to the kindness of God which calls it forth.

Gratitude is the response to a kindness which cannot itself be repeated or returned, which therefore can only be recognised and confirmed as such an answer which corresponds to it and reflects it....The elect man is chosen in order to respond to the gracious God, to be His creaturely image, His imitator.

(C.D. II/2, p. 413)

That election means this is a most extraordinary claim and yet it is thoroughly Biblical (Eph. 5: 1 '...be imitators of God'; Cf. I Cor. 11: 1; Rom. 8: 29). Traditional predestination theology did not stress the goal of election as man's election of God, corresponding to His election of them. Barth goes

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 410.

2. ibid., p. 412.

3. ibid., p. 413.

4. ibid., p. 413: 'gratitude is the establishment of this correspondence.'

so far as to say that the goal of election is that man becomes the imitator of God. He is the imitator of God because he cannot pay back or repeat the grace of God: he can only be gracious in response to God's graciousness, giving Himself to God (the meaning of election for man) in response to God's giving Himself for him (the meaning of election for God). It is the fulness of God's self-giving which brings men to offer themselves in gratitude to Him. Elect man does not therefore become another Christ; he becomes, in Christ, an imitator of the grace of God in Christ. He responds to God and, in his gratitude, corresponds to Him thus becoming His image and imitator. It is important to see that Barth so gladly and unequivocally ascribes this honour to man since in some other aspects of predestination theology he gives to Jesus Christ an individuality which seems to swallow up the individuality of other men. In this magnificent passage he clearly shows that men have an individuality which imitates God, and that this individuality is the purpose of the election of grace.

Since the elect man is not only the object of election (loved by God) but is also a personal subject (responding in gratitude), he lives out his election as he represents the election of God to other men. Elect men 'represent and portray the glory of the grace of God.'<sup>1</sup> They serve, and serve as active subjects, the ministry of the reconciliation of the world in Jesus Christ. The elect live out their election as the servants of God, His messengers and apostles.

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1. ibid., p. 415.

For Barth, then, to live one's election means a very definite action on man's part: a response, which, while it maintains the distinction between God and man, corresponds to God and even imitates Him. As God has served man in Jesus Christ, and as Christ corresponded to the grace of God, man now serves Him in grateful correspondence to Him.

The rejected man is the antithesis of the elect. He is ungrateful.<sup>1</sup> Instead of representing the self-offering of God, he repeats sins already forgiven.<sup>2</sup> God has determined him for blessedness but he chooses joylessness, and so, where the elect serve God willingly, he serves God despite himself, his very gracelessness witnessing to the grace he despises.

The rejected man is the man not willed by God,<sup>3</sup> the man whose rejection has been rejected in Jesus Christ. He bases his life on a refusal, his own refusal. But this does not alter the fact that he is surrounded and confronted on every side by the superiority of the love of God. Barth thinks of him as an usurper, a man trying to occupy the place taken by Jesus Christ and to repeat sins already forgiven. The life of the rejected is therefore based on an impossibility and is absurd.

The rejected man is, then, quite sinister in his own way, but he exists only as a shadow within divinely imposed limits.

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1. ibid., p. 449.

2. ibid., p. 450.

3. ibid., p. 450.



Because Jesus Christ takes his place, He takes from him the right and possibility of his own independent being and gives him His own being. With Jesus Christ he can only have been rejected. He cannot possibly be rejected any more. (C.D. II/2, p. 453)

The life he attempts to live is a possibility contradicted and taken from him by the gospel. Between himself and an independent existence of his own there stands the death of Christ for him in his place and the resurrection of Christ opening up 'for him his place as elect.'<sup>1</sup> But he fights against this grace and refuses to occupy this place opened up for him. He is in an impossible situation. He cannot even suffer the rejection which he deserves as sinner:

He can reproduce but he cannot again perpetrate the sins for which Jesus Christ died. He can endure a likeness of the punishment of death which Jesus Christ has suffered in his place, but he cannot - even remotely - endure death itself.  
(C.D. II/2, p. 454)

He thus lives only as a shadow - a shadow of the reality he rejects and caricatures. He is without substance or the right to an existence of its own. He 'is a shadow which yields, dissolves and dissipates.'<sup>2</sup>

This, then, is the meaning of the election of the individual. It depends entirely on the election and rejection of Jesus Christ: the rejection of the Elect One. In the following chapter we shall have to ask whether Barth has correctly understood the relationship between the Elect One, the Individual in whom all others are elect, and other individuals, i.e., whether he has understood it in such a way that other individuals are fully established in their individual election in the Elect One.

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1. ibid., p. 453.

2. ibid., p. 454.

### CHAPTER III

#### ASSESSMENT OF BARTH'S DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

At the end of the last chapter it was noted that Barth holds that, through the rejection of the Elect One, all men have been placed in a new situation. There is now only one possible place for men to occupy, the place opened up for them in Jesus Christ. He has taken the place of sinful men and borne away in His own person the condemnation which all men deserve: there is therefore no condemnation which can fall on men. There is only one place for men to occupy and to attempt to occupy any other place is 'impossibility'.<sup>1</sup> Those who do occupy the one place open to them have a full status of being and existence, even an autonomy of their own. They are not 'other Christs' but they do participate in His humanity and follow in His footsteps. Things are quite different with those who refuse to occupy this position. These men are impossible, impossible ontologically. They have no independent existence of their own. It is worth noting how serious Barth is in arguing this, and how almost unassailable (even on the grounds of the most orthodox theology) his thesis is.

[The community] knows that God, by the decree He made in the beginning of all His works and ways, has taken upon Himself the rejection merited by the man isolated in relation to Him; that on the basis of this decree of His the only truly rejected man is His own Son;

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1. 'By permitting the life of a rejected man to be the life of His own Son, God has made such a life objectively impossible for all others.' C.D. II/2, p. 346.

that God's rejection has taken its course and reached its goal, with all that that involves, against this One, so that it can no longer fall on other men or be their concern. (C.D. II/2, p. 319).

Barth can even say that 'because Jesus Christ takes his [the sinner's] place, He takes from him the right and possibility of his own independent being and gives him His own being.'<sup>1</sup> Further, 'between him and an independent existence of his own as rejected, there stands the death which Jesus Christ has suffered in his place, and the resurrection by which Jesus Christ has opened up for him His place as elect.'<sup>2</sup>

The reader is compelled to ask whether Jesus Christ has not obliterated the individuality of the rejected. Granted that they have an illegitimate individuality which may legitimately be cancelled out by Christ, what has happened to their individuality as the creatures of God?

This is an important problem for the question of man's turning to God, since it seems that Barth has undervalued the decision of the individual for or against God.

Barth's position may be stated in the following six points:

1. Jesus Christ has taken on Himself the rejection which all men merited.
2. He is the only rejected One.
3. Rejection can therefore never again fall on men. Although not all men live as elect men, all men are elect in their being.
4. These three points constitute the good news to be

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1. ibid., p. 453.

2. ibid., p. 453.

proclaimed to all men. The elect believe this message and live by it. The others do not believe it. Thus all men, whether believers or unbelievers, exist only in relation to this superior divine decision.

5. Those who believe move from being elect merely in their being to being elect in their living. They realise and accept that the superior divine decision has contradicted their godless individuality (i.e., their attempt to live in the strength of their own particular endowments). They now live as those who confirm this superior divine decision. They live in the individuality which is theirs as those who are wholly (individua) loved by the Elect individual, Jesus Christ.

6. Those who isolate themselves from this superior divine decision are isolated in their false individuality. They deny Christ's contradiction of their false life and so live an impossible existence. They are absurd, self-contradictory. Even so, they cannot alter the fact that they are elect in their being and that rejection cannot fall on them.

Two fundamental questions prompt themselves. First, what is the nature of the superior divine decision enacted in the Elect individual, Jesus Christ? And, second, what is the nature and scope of the decision of the men (i.e., all men) who are the objects of this divine decision?

In order to penetrate these questions, it will be helpful to assess Barth's position in the following manner:

1. To begin, it will be observed that according to both tradition and Scripture there is a continuing independent existence of those who reject Christ. The act of God in



Jesus Christ does not cancel out their individuality as creatures of God. If this is so, two questions arise:

2. First, has not Barth misunderstood the individuality not only of the reprobate but also of the elect, i.e., has he not misunderstood the responsibility of men, as the creatures of God, for the gift of eternal life? Against Barth it must be said that man is responsible for his decision to live in Christ or to live outside Him.

3. Second, has not Barth misunderstood the superior divine decision enacted in the elect Individual? What is the nature of this divine decision such that it allows for and indeed establishes man in the responsibility noted in points 1 and 2? In pursuing this question it will emerge that Christ did not bear the same rejection which sinners have merited (as Barth seems to say) and that it is more correct to say that He bore that rejection which places all men under grace and which means that all men will be judged by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Thus all men are responsible for their eternal destinies, not indeed by virtue of the power of their human decision, but by virtue of the responsibility which is theirs as they are encountered by the One who has cancelled out their evil decision and responded to God in their humanity. This individual has enacted the decision which establishes other men in their genuine individuality and decision.

5. In accounting for this responsibility for the gift of eternal life, Barth's doctrine of the superior divine decision needs to be developed in two ways: (a) in the direction of the election not only of the Son but also of the Father and

of the Spirit, and (b) in the direction of establishing the connection between the response of the human nature of Christ and that of those elect in Him, i.e., a doctrine of the interaction between the Holy Spirit and our spirits.

This manner of proceeding reverses the order of the questions which present themselves in view of the summary of Barth's position. Where Barth first establishes the nature of the divine decision and only then the nature of the human decision, this procedure begins with a consideration of the human decision. It has been adopted not because it is thought that theology should begin with man, but because Barth's conclusion about the human decision seems so vulnerable that it is helpful to ask to what extent Scripture and tradition agree with it.<sup>1</sup> Many theologians have seen what Barth sees about the all-embracing power of God's love and yet have been constrained to understand the human decision rather differently from him. Barth is more accurate than most theologians concerning the centrality of Christ in theology and so it may at first seem that he is on better grounds than these others. As this discrepancy is explored it will appear that Barth has misunderstood the character of the decision enacted in Christ. He has, in fact, circumscribed the perfection of the for us in Christ -

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1. E. Brunner takes great offence at Barth's tendency to relativise man's decision of faith, and thinks of it as thoroughly un-Biblical. He thinks that Barth goes further than Origen and other teachers of apokatastasis: E. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics, Vol. I, trans. O. Wyon (Lutterworth, London, 1949), p. 348.

he has allowed an element of the traditional 'impersonality' of the grace of Christ to enter the very heart-beat of his theology. There is a sense in which Barth thinks of grace as working without the response of the men who are its object. Grace did, of course, work without any effort of man's in the death and resurrection of Christ, but it does not reach its goal without creating the response of man. Grace is so gracious that it does not save man without his own consent. Or, to express the same thing another way, Jesus Christ comes to men as their Saviour: He, in His own person has borne away their sins and has in Himself all that they need for responding to God, but they do not participate in His salvation without actively sharing in His response which He shares with them.

1. The existence of those who reject Christ.

In the previous chapter it was noted that Barth said: 'If the proper object of His [God's] love is no other "individual" than this One, then apart from this One there is none who is consumed by the fire of His love which is the wrath of God.'<sup>1</sup> Many theologians understand this truth quite differently. Those who stay outside Christ are consumed by this love which is wrath for the evil. Catherine of Siena observed that there is no doubt of God's love for all His creatures and it was this very fact which deeply disturbed her when she saw the great offence against God in which most creatures lay.<sup>2</sup> God's love is an intense, holy

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 354.

2. 'This soul then, being purified by the fire of divine love, which she found in the knowledge of herself and of God, and her hunger for the salvation of the whole world, and for the reformation of the holy Church,...rose with confidence before the Supreme Father,...showing Him the leprosy of the Holy Church, and the misery of the world,

(Contd.)



fire. It consumes all that is evil. For those who love God, this fire is chastening and purifying, but for those who resist it, it is the fire of destruction. According to Catherine, the damned have exercised false judgment, continually counting their sins and sufferings as greater than God's mercy. 'They [the ungodly] are reproved by this false judgment, which is to hold their sin to be greater than My mercy.'<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the saved exercise good judgment and true discretion in holding to the exhaustless divine mercy. Thus it is clear that God surrounds every man with the fire of love and mercy, and a man is judged by the 'judgment' he makes in relation to this mercy. A man who judges his pains greater than God's mercy makes himself completely devoid of love and so worthy of damnation: he cannot desire or will any good.<sup>2</sup>

Catherine of Siena agrees with Barth in that God's love is a fire which consumes evil, but disagrees in that Christ is not the only individual consumed by it. There are men who persist in their hardness of heart and therefore are forever consumed by this fire.<sup>3</sup> Catherine is moved to urgent intercession for those who despise the love of God.<sup>4</sup>

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Contd. saying: "My Lord, turn the eyes of Thy mercy upon Thy people." Catherine of Siena, Dialogue, trans. A. Thorold (Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., London, 1907), p. 63.

1. ibid., p. 104.

2. ibid., p. 108.

3. 'This fire burns and does not consume, for the being of the soul cannot be consumed...' ibid., p. 106.

4. Barth is, of course, deeply concerned to intercede for the world, but his concern is far less urgent than that of Catherine and those like her because he does not see the danger as they do of men becoming for ever locked in their resistance to God's love. He is not so disturbed by men's hardness of heart as are the mystics. Cf. C. O'Grady, The Church in Catholic Theology (G. Chapman, London, 1969), (Contd.)



Barth has a penetrating understanding of God's wrath. Unlike Ritschl he understands it to be a reality and not the way in which the sinner sees the love of God toward him.<sup>1</sup> Because God's wrath is His wrath against sin and is the fire of His love, Barth can say that in a certain sense our redemption was won by the fulfilment of the divine wrath, i.e., by the execution of that wrath in Christ in which He did away with sin and the man who commits sin.<sup>2</sup> In this respect Barth's account of divine wrath is superior to that of almost all modern theology.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as is clear from his doctrine of God, Barth holds that this wrath has been fulfilled and exhausted in the intercession of Christ and so cannot fall on other men. Christ bore the divine wrath against sin as our substitute and thus wrath is no longer able to fall on us but on Him alone.<sup>4</sup> This must be mistaken since the Apocalypse describes the completion of the wrath of God in the seven plagues leading to the judgment of Babylon, preceding the reign of Christ.<sup>5</sup> Thus, although Christ satisfied the wrath of God, He will execute the wrath

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Contd.) p. 31. O'Grady notes that the Pauline doctrine of man being broken off the trunk of Israel (i.e., election) has little meaning for Barth. What then is the danger of unbelief and the urgency of faith? (p. 33).

1. C.D. II/1, pp. 365-6.
2. This is implied in C.D. IV/1, p. 221. Cf. G.S. Hendry, The Gospel of the Incarnation (S.C.M., London, 1959), p. 125.
3. Even K. Kitamori's penetrating analysis in The Theology of the Pain of God (S.C.M., London, 1966) does not see this. The account of God's wrath in A.T. Hanson, The Wrath of the Lamb, (S.E.C.K., London, 1957) impersonalises this dimension of God's activity and hence completely misses Barth's perception.
4. C.D. II/1, p. 403.
5. Rev. 15: 1-16: 21, esp. 15: 1 and 16: 17.

of God against all those who hold the truth in unrighteousness (Babylon and the world).<sup>1</sup> He has satisfied the wrath of God in His death in order to complete it on those who stay outside Him.

It is amazing that Barth did not find Dante helpful at this point. Dante held that Hell was created by divine love.<sup>2</sup> Damnation is in essence determined by divine love as it meets human perversity.

Justice the founder of my fabric moved:  
To rear me was the task of Power divine,  
Supremest Wisdom, and primeval Love. 3

Precisely because God is love and has created men in love and for love, when they fall away from love they enter its opposite: they hate their neighbours as themselves and hate the God who loves them. This hatred they carry into the eternal world and, locked in it, they can only be the objects

1. Christ satisfied the wrath of God in the sense that in His own person He executed the wrath against sin, thus bearing away the sin of the world. This made Him supremely qualified to execute the divine wrath against all those who resist His grace. It is instructive that the New Testament nowhere explicitly speaks of Christ bearing the wrath of God (though it is not unreasonable to see this implied in the cry of dereliction from the cross, Matt. 27: 47; Mk. 15: 34; also Rom. 3: 25), whereas the Apocalypse speaks directly of the wrath of the Lamb, and it is the Lamb who breaks the seals of the scroll which are the signals for the pouring forth of wrath.
2. A similar point is made in this connection by J.D. Bettis, 'A Critique of the Doctrine of Universal Salvation', Religious Studies 6 (1970), pp. 329-44; p. 341: 'Hell is a creation of God's love.'
3. Dante, La Divina Comedia, Inferno, Canto III, lines 4-6 (Carey trans.).

of divine rejection. Their punishment is perfectly just, as it is proportioned by their perversion of the love of God.<sup>1</sup>

Barth may have ignored Dante because Dante's understanding of reality was not always grounded in Christ. This could not be said of John McLeod Campbell. In a manner similar to Barth he held that Christ has given Himself for all men, but, unlike Barth, he stressed that this means that Christ is and will be the judge of all men.<sup>2</sup> He will judge all men according to their judgment of Him. To reject Christ is to reject love and is therefore to lay oneself open to the wrath of the Lamb.<sup>3</sup> The man who does not believe is not somehow immune from judgment: he is judged by his unbelief and will not escape the consequences of his

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1. Cf. Catherine of Siena, op.cit., p. 106.

2. A passage from his early sermons illustrates this:

'Could a man but apprehend, even in a small measure, what the gift is that is rejected; could he apprehend that God has given to his enemies all that was needful to these enemies sharing in God's own joys, and what is implied in rejecting this gift, choosing death rather than this life of God; did he see the horrid enmity to God implied in the resistance made to his record, then he would have some understanding of what an awful thing the worm is that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.'

J.M. Campbell, Sermons and Lectures (R.B. Lusk, Greenock, 1832), pp. 21-2. Cf.: 'We are to stand before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. We are to be judged by the gospel'. (p. 180).

3. Cf. H.F. Henderson, The Religious Controversies of Scotland (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1905), p. 162.

'When Scripture says, The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, the reason is because Christ hath done something for all men, even died for them. Christ's right to judge them, according to Campbell, springs from His having bought them with a price. Take away His love for all manifested in His sufferings for all, and you take away all reason for His being exalted as their judge. At the Day of Judgment the only sin that will condemn men will be their continued rejection of Christ. The condemnation of the Father will no man incur, but only the wrath of the Lamb.'

See also the last chapter of T. Erskine's Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel (David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1879), entitled: 'The Consistency between Present Forgiveness and Future Judgment'.



lying judgment. With Catherine of Siena, the knowledge of the love of God for all men leads to urgent intercession for those who reject Christ.

But doctrine is to be tested above all by Holy Scripture. Again and again in the New Testament it is implied that the appearance of salvation in Christ means condemnation for those who do not accept Him. The logic seems to be this: light has appeared, and those who prefer darkness to light will be exposed by the light and shown up for the evil men they are. 'This is the judgment, that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light...' (Jn. 3: 19). 'He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has borne to his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.... he who has not the Son has not life. (I Jn. 5: 10-12). The Epistle to the Hebrews insists on the great danger of refusing so great a salvation: the greatness of the salvation makes the damnation of refusing correspondingly great.<sup>1</sup> Since Christ's sacrifice is perfect, complete in every way, 'there no longer remains sacrifice for sins' if a person refused it. This argument is repeated in forms of increasing urgency. The argument of the Apocalypse is similar. The Lamb has shed His blood in love for all, and therefore those

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1. Heb. 2: 3; 10: 29; 12: 25. Each of these verses depends on the idea: if the salvation which has now appeared is much greater than what was formerly revealed, the consequences of rejecting it will be correspondingly greater.



who reject Him will become objects of His wrath. Those who have lived without God remain forever without Him, the anti-thesis of those who have lived with Him and forever enjoy the dwelling of God with men.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus clear that according to Scripture and tradition, the act of God in Jesus Christ does not cancel out or make impossible the independent existence of the reprobate.<sup>2</sup> The grace of Christ renders their act of rejection even more terrible. Precisely because it is a judgment of grace which Christ will reveal in His coming again, it will mean the utter dereliction of the graceless.

If Barth had misunderstood the continuing existence of the reprobate, two questions arise. First, has not he also misunderstood man's being in Himself, his hupostasis

1. Contrast the fate of those who do not know God as described in I Thess. 1: 9 ('they shall suffer...exclusion from the presence of the Lord') with that of the faithful according to Rev. 21: 3 ('the dwelling of God is with men...').
2. By 'independent' is not meant that the godless do not owe their existence to God and to Christ, nor that they derive their existence from themselves (however much they may wish to do this and delude themselves into thinking that they in fact do). Rather, it is intended to combat Barth's extraordinary statement, quoted above (p. 128): 'Because Jesus Christ takes [the sinner's] place, He takes from him the right and possibility of his own independent being and gives him His own being.' If it is the case that the godless do not cease to exist throughout eternity, it must also be the case that, though they still owe their being to Christ, they are separated from Him and are in this sense independent.

as God's creature,<sup>1</sup> whether as participant in Christ or as estranged from Him? It is not implied in this question that man (even as damned) exists apart from his being upheld by the Word of Christ's power (Heb. 1: 3), but it is asked whether there is not a being of man as God's creature such that he is inalienably responsible for his confirmation or rejection of the decision made in Christ concerning him. If man is created by the Father through His Word (through whom He posits man as other than Himself and so responsible to Him) and in the power of His life-giving Spirit (in whom He establishes the union between

1. In arguing for an understanding of man's being in himself it is not being claimed that man owes his being to himself or that he is a kind of god alongside God with an aseity of his own. It is rather being claimed that God created man ex nihilo, not as an emanation of Himself but as the creature of His grace. He is contingent and dependent on God and yet he is other than God with a genuine responsibility to God. He is answerable for his decisions because they are his decisions. Nothing less than this is the miracle of creation: God has created men other than Himself in order that they may for their own part choose and love God, that they may say yes to His Yes. Hence, God would frustrate His own purpose in election if He were to include men in Christ apart from their yes.

More, however, must be said about the meaning of being in Christ. First, all men are created through Christ. They have their hypostasis only through Him. 'All things were made through him, and without him was not made anything that was made....He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.' (Jn. 1: 3, 10); 'in him all things were created...all things were created through him and for him...in him all things hold together.' (Col. 1: 16, 18); also Heb. 1: 2, 3. Second, sinners do not fall into the second death but continue to exist because Christ has borne the sin of the whole world (I Jn. 2: 2). To this extent all men are in

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man and Himself without mitigating his glorious dependent otherness and therefore his responsibility), then, through the Spirit, man is inescapably responsible for his obedience or refusal of His Father's Word:

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Contd.) Christ, but the New Testament speaks of men being in Christ only as they actually participate in the life that is in Him. According to Jn. 15: 6: 'if a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.' A man is not 'in Christ' in the sense used by the New Testament without his active participation in Him.

The position being argued for here is somewhat similar to that of T.F. Torrance, The School of Faith (J. Clarke, London, 1959), pp. cvi-cxvii. Torrance argues that 'human beings have no being apart from Christ as man' (p. cxiii) and connects this affirmation with the 'carnal union' which Christ established with all men by His incarnation. But Torrance also discusses the being of man in relation to the Spirit of Christ, and thus he can affirm with a clarity which Barth cannot that men may indeed suffer damnation (p. cxiv). With Barth, Torrance will not countenance any thought that men can become independent of Christ in the sense that they are no longer sustained in being by Him, and he says that even in Hell men cannot escape or contradict God's love for them, but he approves the following passage of Calvin with which Barth would find himself in disagreement: '"that very relationship of the flesh, by which [Christ] has allied us to Himself, the ungodly break off and dissolve by their unbelief, so that it is by their own fault that they are rendered utter strangers to Him" (Comm. on Ps. 22: 23)' (p. cxvii). Because Torrance does not include men in Christ on the ground of the incarnation alone, but speaks of union with Christ through the communion of the Spirit (p. cvi), he allows man's being and the decisions he makes greater significance than does Barth. This study, however, lays even greater emphasis than does Torrance on the interaction between Creator Spirit and created spirit. If the work of the Spirit is given full honour, it is possible to give the human hypostasis great dignity vis a vis Christ without endangering the truth that man has no hypostasis apart from Him. V. Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, trans. the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (J. Clarke, London, 1957), p. 183, says that in the Church we are 'one in Christ, multiple through the Spirit, a single human nature in the hypostasis of Christ, many human hypostases in the grace of the Holy Spirit.' It is this kind of understanding of man's hypostasis which is argued for here.



the unbeliever (though created by Christ and though He has died for him and does not impute his sins to him)<sup>1</sup> is not in Christ<sup>2</sup> and that it is only together with his decision of faith that he is in Him.<sup>3</sup> It is not that the sinner's act of faith effects this transference from separation to

Contd.) non-Christians, are asleep. Eph. 5: 14 probably also contains a contrast between Christians and non-Christians, and not between wakeful and sleepy Christians, in view of the connection of waking up with the passing from death to life. The transition from death to life is so radical that it can only be the beginning of the new life as a Christian, and not an event within it, Cf. Jn. 5: 25. It thus seems reasonable to hold that these two texts refer to the awakening that occurs when a man is incorporated into Christ. On the other hand, Rom 13: 11 and the frequent exhortations to stay awake and to watch (e.g. Mk. 13: 36-7; Matt. 25: 1-13) refer to the need for those already awake in Christ to stay awake and not to lose what they have by falling asleep.

Thus, the imagery of waking from sleep in the New Testament sometimes means the event of becoming a Christian and sometimes (more often) an event within the life of a person already a Christian. Barth elides these two senses of awakening and thus thinks of the awakening in which a person becomes a Christian as a transition from being asleep in Christ to being awake in Him. The person who becomes a Christian passes from being in Christ in a broader sense to being in Christ in a narrower sense (C.D. IV/2, p. 555). He awakens to what he already is. But if it is the case that non-Christians are separated from Christ (Eph. 2: 12), there is both an awakening to Christ (i.e., conversion), and an awakening in Christ.

1. Jn. 3: 16-21. God loved the world and sent the Son to save the world. The Son gave His life a ransom for all (I Tim. 2: 1-6; I Jn. 2: 2). The life of God is available for all men in the Son, but only those who receive the Son have this life (I Jn. 5: 12).
2. Eph. 2: 12; Col. 1: 21; Rom. 8: 9.
3. Eph. 2: 8-10. This passage states 1. that we were once dead, by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind; 2. that God raised us up to life with Christ; and, therefore, 3. that we are saved by God through grace, and if by grace, then through faith (2: 8a is an expansion of 2: 5c). It is thus safe to say that a man is raised to life in Christ only together with his act of faith.



union with Christ: that is the work of the Father<sup>1</sup> and the Spirit;<sup>2</sup> but a man does not find himself in Christ apart from faith in Him.

It would seem, therefore, that man is in an impossible situation. It is only as He is in Christ that he can turn to God and yet apart from such repentance he is separated from Christ. The solution must lie in this direction. Sinners are created in Christ and He has united Himself with them: He died for our sins and is raised for our justification. He Himself is the transition from our death to life. He Himself is the Way to Himself. But He Himself is the living Way and therefore men are in Him only as they share His life. To be in Him is to live in Him. As He was baptised into repentance, so men are in Him only as He brings them to share His repentance.

It is through His Spirit that Christ is this living Way for alienated sinners to Himself. Since He comes in the Spirit, He does not automatically include sinners in Himself, but awakens them from death to share in Himself. Christ is the Truth who has taken responsibility for those created through Him, and therefore His Spirit leads them into His truth, awakening their conscience to the truth and leading them along the living way from death to life. Their created being is awakened to true life. This happens only through the power of His Spirit, only through Christ's sharing what is His with sinners, but it happens in such a

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1. Col. 1: 12-14.

2. I Cor. 12: 13.

way that man's created spirit witnesses with the Spirit of truth.

If this account of man's acknowledgement of Christ holds, man's being as the creature of God is such that (through the Spirit of Christ alone) he can acknowledge Christ as his Creator's gift to him. This acknowledgement is his own act and it takes place in accordance with his conscience. He does what he was created to do and it is he who does it.

Unless we operate with this kind of understanding of the hupostasis of man we will be unable to account for 1. the continuing existence of the rejectors of Christ as the damned, 2. the transition from separation from Christ to union with Him and 3. the continuing existence of the elect as the blessed.

1. If we understand man as the fallen creature of God, with an hupostasis of his own, we can understand that those who isolate themselves from Christ have no place (as Barth says) but that they continue to exist in their hupostasis as those who deny the truth and refuse the place bought for them by Christ. Elected and created for life, they deny it and continue to exist as those whose consciences condemn them (Rom. 2: 15). They continue to exist in the 'no place' to which they have condemned themselves and are the self-alienated victims of the outer darkness which they prefer to light. Their existence is, as such, impossible; God prepared no place for them and they can only go to the rejection prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25: 41). It is as absurd and as impossible as the setting up of the

'desolating sacrilege' in the place where it ought not to be.<sup>1</sup> Barth's description of them as 'ontologically impossible' is no exaggeration if this is taken to mean, not that they cannot remain reprobate, but that they have no place in being at all, and that they are rejected, merely fleeing shadows. The correction which is needed to Barth is that, since the sinner is ineradicably the creature of God, he does not cease to have an eternal existence even as this impossible being.<sup>2</sup>

2. It is possible to account for the transition from separation from Christ to union with Him only if we operate with the idea of man as being the creature of God with an hypostasis of his own. Man fallen from God and in sin is unable to respond to the call of God. He can respond only as he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. He is the creature of God and there is that in him which witnesses with the Holy Spirit. The witness of men and the Spirit agree and join together (Rom. 8: 16; Acts 5: 32; Jn. 15: 26-7; I Jn. 5: 6). These passages apply to men who are already Christians, but the notion of conscience applies to all men, whether believers or not, and has much to do with the transition to belief (or the failure to make this step). The idea of conscience in the New Testament relates to a person's knowledge of good. It can therefore witness with the Spirit

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1. Mk. 13: 14.

2. This is well described in S. Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, trans. W. Lowrie (Oxford University Press, London, 1941), e.g. p. 25: 'the torment of despair is precisely this, not to be able to die.' This despair is a sickness of the created spirit.

of the Creator and recognise the good in Christ. Paul speaks of his conscience bearing witness with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 9: 1) and of the conscience of the Gentiles bearing witness with the law of God written on their hearts (Rom 2: 15f.). There is such a thing as a blinded, corrupted or seared conscience, but this only demonstrates that conscience has been perverted from its proper role of discerning the truth. Since conscience is this kind of reality in man, the Holy Spirit enlightens man's conscience to its true status when He brings man to recognise and acknowledge the gospel as that which is true and good for him. Paul says: 'by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of every man in the sight of God.' (II Cor. 4: 2). He is here speaking especially of the straightforwardness of his conduct, but he also means that the open statement of the truth commends itself to the conscience. Only those whose conscience is blinded do not recognise the gospel as good news. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the transition from death to life in relation to conscience - the blood of Christ purifies the conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9: 14). Both believer and unbeliever have a conscience, but in becoming a Christian the conscience is purified.

The transition from unbelief to belief does not happen without the conscience recognising the truth. As a man comes to recognise the truth about Jesus and acknowledge Him to be Lord (I Cor. 12: 3) he is baptised by the Spirit into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12: 13). He is united with Christ, and all that is Christ's is his through the Spirit. Thus, his



recognition of the truth does not itself effect the transference from separation to union with Christ - this happens as Christ baptises with His Spirit - but this recognition is his own act of acknowledgement made by his conscience as it purified and as his hupostasis responds to the proclamation of Christ.

The importance of conscience and the response of man in relation to the individual's election was well expressed by Thomas Erskine. Erskine pointed out that a man is free only when he does what he knows to be for his good.<sup>1</sup> Like Barth, he believed that freedom is not a neutral capacity for good or evil but an obedience to the good alone. In this light Jonathan Edwards' definition of freedom as the power a man has to do what pleases him is quite unsatisfactory, since it does not include knowledge of the good.<sup>2</sup> On such a definition a tyrant could practise a deception on a man, inducing him to do what he (the man) wanted to do, and yet be using this 'freedom' to destroy him.<sup>3</sup> This 'freedom' is actually bondage. Erskine argues that in relation to someone who has authority over us, we can be free in obedience only if his purpose for us is for our good and we enter into that purpose. Thus, we are perfectly free in the service of God because His purpose is for our good and He brings us to 'sympathise' with that purpose. This happens as the Holy Spirit meets our spirit, our conscience.

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1. T. Erskine, The Doctrine of Election (David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1878), p. 342: 'As it is in the Spirit alone that we can apprehend righteousness as distinct from all selfish ends...so it is only whilst we live in the Spirit that we have true liberty.'

2. ibid., pp. 335f.

3. ibid., p. 338.

Are we then capable of freedom under God's government? It is evident...that we cannot be so except on two conditions, first, that God's Spirit be communicated to us, enabling us to enter into God's purpose; and secondly, that this purpose be one that embraces our good, thus enabling us to sympathise with him in it. If true liberty consists in our full sympathy with God in his purpose, then the capacity of liberty consists in the meeting of these two conditions. For as no man knoweth the things of a man but by the human spirit in him, so no man knoweth the things of God, but by the divine Spirit (I Cor. 2: 11), and no man can willingly co-operate in a purpose unless he knows that it embraces his good. I must, therefore have the Spirit of God in order to fit me to enter God's purpose; and that purpose must be truly and decidedly for my good that I should be capable of sympathising with it. (Doctrine of Election, pp. 339-40)

Erskine here rightly draws attention to man's recognition of God's purpose, and to man's own freedom to 'sympathise' with God. In this way he guards against any suggestion that God includes man in Christ without his own assent to Christ. God's purpose for man is so good that he will not over-ride created being. Barth endangers this being of man by maintaining that man's being is in Christ apart from his assent in the Spirit to Christ. Indeed, it is surprising that Barth has so little to say about the response of man in his doctrine of election. Barth says much that is helpful and even breaks new ground in his discussion of the response of Christ, but he has short-circuited the problem of how a man comes to participate in His response by speaking of the being of all men in Christ irrespective of their response to Him. Erskine points to an essential aspect of the doctrine of election, the meeting of His Spirit with ours. In this context it is worth mentioning that Barth's anthropology gives too little scope for the distinction and therefore interaction between God's Spirit and ours. There is a tendency for Barth to say

that the spirit which man has is the Spirit of God,<sup>1</sup> and thus to threaten the interaction between Creator Spirit and created spirit.

3. If we understand man as the creature of God with an hypostasis of his own, we can clearly account for the continuing existence of the elect as those whose hypostasis confirms their election in Christ. They utter their 'Amen' to the election, through Jesus Christ (II Cor. 1: 20). Their spirits are not swallowed up in His, but bear witness with Him (Rom. 8: 16). Participation in Christ does not obliterate the distinction between Christ and those who are in Him because it is participation through His Spirit.

3. The nature of the superior divine decision concerning man, enacted in the rejection of Christ.

To this point in the assessment of Barth's doctrine of election it has been shown that Jesus Christ is not the only

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1. C.D. III/2, pp. 344-66. According to Barth, man exists because he has Spirit, and this Spirit is to be understood as the Holy Spirit (p. 356). The Spirit comes from God and is God (pp. 355-6). It must be asked, however, whether the Spirit which is the basis of man's existence as creature is in fact identical with the Holy Spirit. According to Gn. 2: 7 'the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.' There can be no doubt that this spirit comes from God nor that it constitutes man a living being with an essential relationship with his Creator; but it is another thing to identify this spirit with the Spirit of God (Gn. 1: 1). For if this spirit is the Spirit of God, how can man's spirit enter into relationship with God's Spirit? How can there be a witnessing of man's spirit with God's Spirit? If man's spirit is the Spirit of God, our witnessing with the Spirit can only mean that God witnesses to Himself in us. Further, if man's spirit is the Spirit of God, does this not mean that man is man only by virtue of being also God? Does not this imply a kind of Apollinarianism in anthropology?

individual consumed in the fire of God's love and that man has an indestructible hypostasis which acknowledges, or fails to acknowledge, Christ. It must now be asked: what is the nature of the superior divine decision such that it establishes man in this responsibility?

The divine decision of election as enacted in Christ is superior to man. Christ has borne the curse of the law,<sup>1</sup> and all men are now under grace and not law. Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10: 4; cf. Eph. 2: 15). Christ has been rejected in man's place and there is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Him (Rom. 8: 1).

According to Barth, Christ bore the rejection which sinners should have borne. Because he connects this so closely with election, and with Christ's rejection for all men, it is almost impossible for him to avoid universalism. If Christ has suffered the rejection which all men deserved, rejection can never again fall on any man. Older protestant orthodoxy was not troubled by universalism because it restricted the death of Christ to the elect alone. Barth refuses to allow this narrowing of the work of Christ, and he does so with Biblical evidence. It is the sin of the world which the Lamb of God has borne,<sup>2</sup> Christ is the Saviour of the world and especially of those who believe<sup>3</sup> and He has given Himself a ransom for all.<sup>4</sup> If this means that Christ bore the same rejection that all men

1. Gal. 3: 10-14.

2. Jn. 1: 29.

3. I Tim. 4: 10; cf. I Jn. 2: 2.

4. I Tim. 2: 6.



deserve,<sup>1</sup> all men are saved from rejection. But, as has been shown above in section 1, only those who believe are saved. Therefore, Christ's rejection for all men must be reinterpreted to mean not His bearing the same rejection as all men deserve (though it may very well be an equivalent rejection), but the rejection which saves all men who by faith are united with the Rejected One. If this reinterpretation is made, Barth's doctrine will be delivered from the vestiges of the older orthodoxy and brought into closer harmony with the early protestant Reformers, especially Luther.

It is not unfair to Barth to say that, at least in Volume II of the Dogmatics, he has understood the rejection of

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1. This was held by the older orthodoxy. H. Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, trans. G.T. Thomson (G. Allen and Unwin, London, 1950), p. 465: Christ's suffering was 'not indeed an eternal suffering; but still it was suffering aroused by the same feeling as the eternal penal suffering of the damned; i.e. by the full feeling of the punitive wrath of God, so that in intensity and reality it was the same as the suffering of the damned.' J.K. Mozley, The Doctrine of the Atonement (Duckworth, London, 1915), p. 156 says: '...seventeenth century controversies between Arminians and Calvinists were directed...to the alternatives of a 'universal' or a 'limited' atonement, as to which one must say that granted the belief that Christ endured the amount of punishment due to men, and granted further that all men would not be saved, the Calvinistic restriction of 'men' to 'some men' was strictly logical and just. An atonement made for all men is quite inconsistent with a doctrine of reprobation, and a mathematically penal view of the value of Christ's death.' J. Walker, The Theology and Theologians of Scotland (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1872), p. 46 says: '...the old Scotch divines clung to the view that Christ not merely suffered, but bore the same sufferings in kind as were due to His people.' See also A. Ritschl, Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation (Edmonston and Douglas, Edinburgh, 1872), pp. 280-4. J. Wollebius held that Christ's 'undergoing punishment is the act whereby he took on himself the punishment due to us,' J.W. Beardslee III, Reformed Dogmatics (Oxford University Press, New York, 1965), p. 99.

Christ to some extent along the lines of the older protestant orthodoxy. Both Barth and the older orthodoxy think of Christ bearing the same rejection as sinners deserve. Though Barth does not say this in so many words, it is clear that he has this in mind, as it is the only way of making sense of his claim that if rejection has fallen on Christ it can never again fall on other men.<sup>1</sup> Barth and orthodoxy

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1. Barth holds that Jesus Christ suffered 'eternal damnation' (C.D. II/2, p. 421) and that He was 'delivered up to eternal death' (ibid., p. 352). Cf. 'Only God, our Lord and Creator,...could suffer eternal death in our stead as the consequence of our sin in such a way that it was finally suffered and overcome and therefore did not need any more to be suffered by us,' C.D. II/1, p. 403. Also, Credo, trans. J.S. McNab (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1936), pp. 83-94 where Barth stresses Christ's bearing our punishment in order that we should not have to bear what we deserve. (In C.D. IV/1, this conception of Christ's sufferings is not so prominent, see, e.g., p. 253). Barth is not operating with the mechanistic and causative notions which were important in the older protestant orthodoxy. Even so, he has not entirely escaped this way of thinking if he can say that Christ has borne the rejection that men deserve and therefore it will never again fall on others. This statement seems to mean that if Christ has suffered punishment for the sin of all men there is no more punishment left. The total amount of punishment has been borne. If any man were to be punished for his sins it would mean that his sins have been punished twice (i.e., once on the cross and again in eternity). Barth eschews the scholastic questions of how 'eternal' death can be endured in the finite time of three days, but it seems that he is saying that the same, literal, eternal punishment which we deserve was borne by Christ on the cross. It is amazing that Barth does not devote much attention to the question of the quality of suffering in Christ's rejection, and hence also to the question of how it can be that Christ did indeed suffer fully for the sins of the whole world, and yet there will still be those who will eternally suffer for their sins. It could well be argued that McLeod Campbell's great book, The Nature of the Atonement, grew out of just this problem. Being convinced that Christ died for all men, and not being a universalist, he saw that the atonement could not be conceived in the manner of either the old (Chapter III) or the modified (Chapter IV) Calvinists. The atonement was not so much suffering for so much sin, but a quality of righteous sorrow for sin such that all who share in Christ by faith are adopted as sons in Him. Cf. E. Irving, Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened, in Collected Writings, Vol. 5, ed. G. Carlyle (Strahan, London, 1865), pp. 146-202.

differ in that he thinks of Christ bearing the same rejection as all men whereas orthodoxy, contradicting Scripture, says that Christ bore the same rejection as the elect only.<sup>1</sup> So long as theology operates with the notion of Christ suffering the same rejection as men deserved, it will be unable to give faith its essential place: Christ has borne the punishment of the saved whether or not they believe. In practice, of course, theology has never said this (though there is a sense in which Barth implies it). The older orthodoxy insisted on faith, though in terms of strict coherence it need not have done so. Indeed, faith was held to be necessary, not because it was intrinsically necessary to salvation, but because God required it.<sup>2</sup> If it was asked why God required it, the best answer that could be given was that faith excluded any human merit, an answer which made it impossible to see why God reckons faith as righteousness. Barth, at least in Volume II, does not need to insist on faith, since he holds that a man is saved in his being without faith, and needs faith only to live the election of his being. Even at this point, however, Barth is to be preferred to orthodoxy, since he shows the necessary connection between election and union with Christ, although he still fails to show the

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1. Calvinist orthodoxy insisted on this limitation of Christ's sufferings to that merited by the elect one, see Ritschl, op.cit., p. 280. J. Wollebius (in J.W. Beardslee III, op.cit., pp. 105-6) and F. Turretin (ibid., pp. 418-43) among many others denied that Christ died for all men.
  2. Cf. J.M. Campbell, Nature of the Atonement (J. Clarke & Co., London, 1959), pp. 97-101. Campbell points out that certain theologians made the connection between faith and justification arbitrary (p. 100) and that this can be avoided only by insisting, as does J. Edwards, that faith is connected with justification because it connects the individual with Christ (pp. 97 and 99).



necessity of faith because he separates union with Christ from faith in Him.

The reinterpretation of the rejection of Christ which is needed, then, will have to fulfil the following two conditions:

1. That Christ's rejection was a rejection commensurate with the sin of the whole world. Against orthodoxy and in agreement with Barth (and Luther) it will allow no diminution of the Scriptural doctrine of Christ bearing the sin of all men. Against both orthodoxy and Barth it will interpret the commensurate nature of Christ's sufferings not in terms of the same punishment, but in terms of a real bearing of the sin of the world, i.e., a dealing with sin and only in this sense a punishment.
2. That Christ's rejection saves only when a man is
  - (a) united with Christ and,
  - (b) united with Him by faith.

Such a reinterpretation of the rejection of Christ has in fact taken place within the protestant Church. In the midst of the older orthodoxy, certain Calvinist theologians were disturbed by the fact that many Church people counted on their election without faith. If Christ was the substitute of the elect, how could they be rejected, no matter how sinful their lives?<sup>1</sup> Against this, Erskine of Linlathen pointed out that such a doctrine of substitution

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1. This idea is the subject of James Hogg's The Confessions of a Justified Sinner, although his treatment has elements of distortion and caricature because he suggests that high Calvinists held that the elect are incapable of sin.



and election was immoral.<sup>1</sup> It could not be just of God to elect sinners unless, through the death of Christ, they died to sin. Unless the sinner died to sin in union with the death of Christ - unless, that is, the sinner suffered the punishment of his sin in the death of Christ - the election of sinners was an immoral fiction.<sup>2</sup> Thus, he insisted that Christ did not die as the substitute of the sinner, in the sense that the sinner does not die, but as the Head of the sinner, so that the sinner suffers the punishment of his sin through Christ's death. Erskine's way of expressing this was far from satisfactory, since he tended to say that the sinner suffers the punishment of his sin in his death to self and did not stress sufficiently clearly that this death to self takes place only in union with Christ on the cross. Yet he was moving in a helpful direction. He showed that Christ did not bear a punishment in stead of sinners, but a punishment such that sinners die to their sin in Him. It is thus only through the union of faith with Christ, the Head of the new humanity, that election reaches sinners.

McLeod Campbell accomplished a deeper reinterpretation of the older orthodoxy. He, too, was worried by the habit in the Church of counting on salvation without genuine faith. His concern for the Church led him to see that Christ gave Himself for all men without exception<sup>3</sup> and that therefore all

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1. T. Erskine, The Doctrine of Election, pp. 154-6.

2. T. Erskine, The Brazen Serpent (David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1879), pp. 41-2.

3. J.M. Campbell, Sermons, p. 101:  
 Christ the Son of God, God in our nature...this Lord Jesus Christ, did, as the head and representative of the family of mankind, offer himself without spot to God, as a living sacrifice, wherewith God was well pleased; and God, in acceptance of this sacrifice,...did remove absolutely,  
 (Contd.)

men are categorically summoned to faith. Faith is faith in Christ Himself, and all the benefits of faith, including escape from wrath, are in Christ. Faith is the only appropriate response to Christ, since it alone trusts Him and receives Him. Thus, although Christ has died for all men, only those who receive Him by faith are saved. In preaching this, Campbell found that he had also to question the belief that Christ suffered the punishment of our sins. If it were punishment that Christ suffered, would not all men be free of punishment without faith?; but if He suffered for sins, putting them to death in His death, only those who were united with Him by faith would be free of sin and hence free of punishment. Following out these thoughts, Campbell concluded that it is better not to call Christ's death a punishment for sin but rather a condemning of sin in His own person, a sorrowing over sin.<sup>1</sup>

The fundamental shift in Campbell's thinking was the shift to a thoroughly personal understanding of righteousness. In the older orthodoxy, faith was connected with righteousness because God was pleased to impute the righteousness of Christ to believers, but with Campbell faith was a real union with the personal righteousness of Christ. It was trust in Him which received Him. This righteousness of Christ was not

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Contd.) unconditionally, without waiting for us to say whether we desired it or not, the barrier between Himself and us; and gave to us Christ, on the ground of whose work the barrier was removed, to be to us a living way of access, having the Holy Spirit for us, for that end; so that he is revealed to us, as the one in whose strength we are to draw near to that God to whom we are free to come. These are the facts concerning the work of Christ for all and every human being.

1. J.M. Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, pp. 140-1.

merely the perfect keeping of the law, but it was that righteousness which proved itself in taking on itself the sins of His brethren and judging them in His person, executing God's righteous judgment on them in His death. Thus, Christ became the place, the person, in whom sin was overcome and righteousness was victorious. Hence, it is true to say that Christ bore away the sin of the world (because in His body and spirit alone was sin known as sin and judged as such) and yet only those who are in Him, in His body, by faith, are free of sin.

In Campbell's thinking all suggestion of righteousness, sin and punishment as a quantity, as a kind of substance, has been transformed into the quality of personal relationships. It is not that the quantity of punishment demanded for the righteous punishment for sin has been transferred (almost mechanically) to Christ, and so borne away by Him. Rather, Christ as the righteous One, loves His brethren as Himself and therefore knows the full gravity of their sin,<sup>1</sup> and judges it as sin. Righteousness as love meets sin, confesses it as the sin it is, and so expiates it. In this way Christ bears sin, not as a transferred substance, but as sorrow over the sins of His brethren. Similarly, men participate in His righteousness, not by the transference of righteousness to them, like a garment, but by receiving Him through faith and so by sharing in the righteousness of His body.

McLeod Campbell was reluctant to say that Christ was

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1. ibid., pp. 230-1.

rejected by the Father on the cross.<sup>1</sup> In his interpretation of psalm 22 he stressed the words 'My God, My God' as indicating that the Son exercised here His most profound faith in God, pleading with Him as His beloved Father. He pointed out that the whole psalm is redolent with faith in God in the most extreme situation. Yet it must be said that it witnesses to an even more perfect faith if the Son suffered abandonment by His Father and yet remained steadfast in His faith. If Christ did in fact bear in Himself the sin of the world, and judged it in His person, He must have borne the rejection which is implied in that judgment. As Irving constantly said,<sup>2</sup> Christ in His love gave Himself to the uttermost, giving Himself up to the dereliction, desolation and rejection of the judgment of sin. God gave Himself in Christ, giving Himself up to rejection, yet it was not the same rejection as that of sinners but the rejection suffered by the holy and sinless One as He confessed sin for what it is and judged it in Himself. In this way Christ endured a rejection for the sin of the whole world. He put sin away on the cross by His faith in His Father. His rejection was thus not one which delivers impersonally from sin, but one

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1. Campbell doubted that Christ actually experienced forsakenness on the cross (Nature of the Atonement, pp. 276-281). Irving saw that if Christ were really to confess our sin He would experience the desolation of the hiding of the Father's face.
  2. E. Irving, The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened, pp. 147, 288-9, 295. Also, The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Human Nature (Baldwin & Cradock, London, 1830), p. 97: 'I believe that his [Christ's] perfect holiness did not prevent him one jot from being treated as the greatest sinner by his Father; hid his countenance from him; forsook him, stood afar off, and heard him not (Psal. xxii.); bruised him, and put him to grief....Wherefore? for any sin he had done? Verily, verily, No. Because the Father loved to see his Son suffer, and was satisfied therewith? (Contd.)



which delivers only as a man shares in the faith of the Rejected One, or, more precisely, as the Rejected One shares His faith with him through His Spirit. On this interpretation it could never be said that because Christ has been rejected, rejection will never again fall on any man: it is only as the Rejected One shares His life of faith in the Father, and shares it through His Spirit, that a man escapes his sin and therefore his rejection. The fact of Christ's rejection for all men is taken quite as seriously as in Barth, but, because Christ perfected faith in God while suffering the rejection, it is only as a man shares in His faith that he is elect. As was noted above, Barth holds that the election of men 'consists concretely of their faith in Him', and that this faith is a participation in His prayer on the cross and His resurrection, yet he compromises this perception (which is almost identical with the one just outlined) by saying that men are elect in their being and share in Christ independently of their faith in Him.<sup>1</sup>

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Contd.) Oh! verily No. Why then? Because the Father would prove how far down the grace of God can go...' In Christ's Holiness in Flesh (John Lindsay, Edinburgh, 1831) Irving drew attention to Christ's perfect faith 'in all conflicts and extremities' and especially on the cross (pp. 16-7).

1. H. Bouillard, in his Karl Barth (Aubier, Paris, 1957), Première Partie, pp. 157-8, notes this difficulty. As he puts it, Barth does say that it is only in faith that a man has eternal life, but he adds that a man is elect in his being apart from his faith. Thus, there is 'une ambiguïté dans la doctrine barthienne de la prédestination' (p. 158). Bouillard argues, as is done here, that 'être dans le Christ et exister dans la foi, c'est tout un' (p. 158), but, because he does not speak of this faith as the faith which Christ shares with men, he thinks of it as a 'condition' of justification.

The reinterpretation of the sufferings of Christ achieved by Erskine, Campbell and Irving fulfils the conditions which were noted as being needed for an adequate doctrine of the rejection of Christ as it relates to the election of men. 1. Christ's rejection is commensurate with the sins of the world. He sorrowed over His brethren, judged their sins in His person and gave Himself up to rejection in order to fulfil this judgment. It is only in His person that sin is dead and therefore that the rejection of sinners is overcome. 2. It is, therefore, (a) only as a man participates in Christ that he is free from sin and from condemnation. But (b) it is also true (pace Barth) that it is only as he shares in Christ's faith that he shares in the judgment of sin that took place in Him. This last point, 2(b), requires some elucidation. Let it be said that it is not being argued that faith is a kind of work of man's which is added to Christ, nor that Christ has not died for man's sins apart from his faith in Him. Rather, it is being argued that the being of Christ, the being of the One in whom others are elect, is the being of the One who judged sin and endured its rejection by faith. It was by faith in God's very righteousness, which rejected Him as He confessed the sin of His brethren, that He ~~trusted~~ God to redeem Him and with Him those who share in Him. By faith He cried to God out of the depths, pleading the forgiveness of God for which God is to be feared, and was heard for His godly fear; by faith He waited for the Lord and received the plenteous

redemption of the Lord, the Lord who redeems Israel from all his iniquities (Ps. 130). It was thus by faith that the Rejected One is also the Redeemer. If, then, a man is to share in His being, it can only be by sharing His faith. This happens as Christ shares His faith with the faithless and so brings them to share in Him. Thus, man's faith is not a condition of election in the sense that he must bring it to God, but is rather that which Christ creates in him by sharing it with him.

In the light of this reinterpretation of the rejection of Christ, two modifications of Barth's understanding of the superior divine decision enacted in Christ may be made. First, Christ's rejection was not a rejection such that, having fallen on Him, rejection can never again fall on others. It was the rejection in which, by faith, He dealt with the sins of the world. Second, men escape rejection and participate in election only as He shares His faith with them. If these two modifications are made, the superior divine decision does not mean that a man is elect apart from his own election of God. The human decision, as the goal of the divine decision, is in no way threatened. Barth's own thesis, that God's decision is the basis of man's decision, is strengthened.

One further point must be made in this connection. It is by the Spirit that Christ shares His faith with others. Barth says little about the work of the Spirit in his doctrine of election. Indeed, the work of the Spirit as He who brings men to share in the being of Christ is crowded out by his doctrine that men are in Christ independently of



their faith in Him. Barth seems to be saying that because Christ has elected God, all other men in their being have also elected Him. He seems (despite his intention) to elide the being of Christ and the being of men. Christ and men do come together, but it is through the Spirit that this happens. The Spirit brings the whole Christ to the whole man so that man, in his being as well as in his act of faith, is brought to participate in Christ. In this way God's decision enacted in Christ does not automatically save man's being, but saves him only together with his decision of faith. So great is God's love, His delection, that He elects and saves man only as He creates in him genuine response on his part.

4. The responsibility of men for their eternal destinies.

If Christ's rejection is understood not as punishment for sin, but as the confession and hence the bearing away of sin, He has placed all men in a supremely responsible position. Christ will return and judge all men according to their response to Him. Those who accept Him and His bearing away of sin will have no rejection, but those who refuse Him will remain in their sins and be rejected accordingly.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Christ's rejection does affect all men, but not in the way Barth implies, i.e., that rejection can never again be the lot of man. Rather, the rejection of Christ has given all men a heightened dignity of responsibility. As will be argued below, this in no

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1. Cf. E. Brunner, op.cit., p. 349.



sense means a return to those notions of responsibility which Barth abhors, the notions in which man's decision as such determines his destiny, notions which are inherently Pelagian. It does ~~mean~~, however, that man's response to the superior divine decision - his confirmation or denial of it - is of inescapable importance for his own destiny. It means that the superior divine decision is such that man is exalted to adult responsibility, that he is responsible for his destiny vis à vis God's decision regarding Him.

This enhanced responsibility depends entirely on the character of the superior divine decision. In this superior decision, Christ has rejected man's evil decision and has responded to God, electing Him in humanity. Thus, Christ has eternal life for men. He is wholly for men. Therefore, to accept Him is to accept one's own eternal life; to reject Him is to reject one's own eternal life. Each man's destiny is in his own hands, but only because man has already been determined for life by Christ.

This enhanced responsibility does not thrust a burden onto the shoulders of man. It is not a matter of summoning all his available energies to exercise this responsibility. As Barth says, when faced with Christ, man is not Hercules at the cross-roads, the hero who valiantly chooses the good.<sup>1</sup> This enhanced responsibility depends entirely on the One who encounters man. He is not only eternal life: He is also

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1. K. Barth, Table Talk, ed., J.D. Godsey, 'Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers', No. 10 (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1963), p. 37; C.D. IV/2, p. 495.

the One who makes men free to respond. He has rejected (in His own rejection) their evil decision and also elected God in their humanity. In Him, a man is freed from his evil decision against God and freed to elect God. Thus, when a man accepts Christ, he does so in the freedom which Christ has for Him. He makes use of the freedom which Christ gives Him. When a man rejects Christ, he fails to make use of the freedom which Christ has for him. There is no human merit in accepting Christ, and equally a man is without excuse when he refuses Him. Since the freedom to accept comes entirely from Christ and is offered without reservation to all men, it is not as if the one who accepts makes a valiant and difficult decision, and the one who refuses is not valiant and perhaps prevented by circumstances from accepting Him. Christ can thus justly judge all men on their acceptance or refusal of Him, and can do so out of the mouths of the men he judges. Those who accept him acknowledge Him to be the One He is. They have allowed Him to be eternal life for them, and thus in accepting them at the final judgment Christ judges them on their own words and actions. Those who reject Christ refuse to acknowledge Christ as the One He is. They refuse to take hold of the freedom which is theirs in Him and therefore they also will be judged out of ~~their~~ own mouths. They have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. They are without excuse, just as the elect are without merit. It is thus true to say that because Christ has made a perfect response in His humanity, He will be the judge of the response of men. His perfect response has made the response of man both real and possible - has made it

inexcuseable for man not to make it - and therefore He makes men supremely responsible for their destiny as He encounters them.

The significance of these observations for the assessment of Barth's understanding of the superior divine decision in relation to man's decision may be summarised in these four points:

1. Barth is correct to say that the divine decision is superior to the human decision and that men can only confirm it or deny it. He is also correct to say that men cannot undo that decision or in any way affect its superior power over them. But he is hardly correct to imply that men do not thereby have responsibility for their own destinies.

Precisely because the divine decision is superior to man and for his good, this divine decision becomes the ground on which men are judged.

2. That the superior divine decision means for men that they are responsible for their destinies means (a) that the human decision as such does not become that which determines a man's destiny and (b) that this responsibility is exercised entirely in the strength of Christ. In this sense Barth is correct. It is not man's decision as such which brings about his salvation, as is implied in much existentialist theology. God has elected man's salvation, and it is as a man accepts or rejects that salvation that God's decision proceeds for or against him.

3. Since the superior divine decision is wholly for man and his salvation, and since this salvation comes to man in Christ, there is only one responsible decision for man

to make as he is encountered by Him - to accept Him.

(a) If a responsible decision is understood as one in which a man makes careful cognisance of the consequences of his decision, then, when Christ meets him, the only responsible decision is to accept the One who is wholly for him. To refuse Him is to refuse one's own good and, on this definition of responsibility, it is an irresponsible decision. (b) Again, when Christ encounters a man, there is only one free decision, the decision for Christ who is his freedom. It is not as though the decisions for and against Him were equally possible or legitimate, as if there were a certain neutrality in the face of Christ which gives equal possibility to either decision. Since Christ carries with Him the very freedom in which men respond to Him, it is a free decision to accept Him, an unfree decision to refuse Him. The negative decision is not, of course, literally impossible, but it is in fact a failure to respond and so involves no freedom but only bondage.

In relation to this point, Barth deserves high praise. Almost alone among theologians he has seen that the superior divine decision gives men a genuine freedom, a freedom which it not the empty neutrality of freedom of choice but the freedom for freedom.

4. Yet what Barth says about the encounter with Christ needs to be expanded. There is a sense in which Barth dissolves the encounter with Christ into participation in Christ. It is true that the freedom to respond to Christ is contained in Christ and is used only as men participate in Him. This underlies what was affirmed in point 3 above,



but this point needs to be enlarged to show what happens in the encounter with Christ. It needs to be shown that the superior divine decision enacted in Christ, the decision which includes the strength in which men respond to Christ, comes to them in His person in such a way that they are and become themselves in this encounter. Rather than ceasing to be themselves, for the first time they become themselves. This depends entirely on Christ Himself. As Christ encounters a sinner, He offers Himself as the One who was delivered into the hands of sinners and crucified by them. He offers Himself, therefore, as One who makes no resistance to their handling of Him: there is no coercion in Him, only the strength of perfect gentleness. But he offers Himself as the One who, while in the hands of sinners, resolutely set His face toward the cross. He did not lose Himself, but affirmed Himself, acting resolutely for the good of the men who had Him in their hands. He loved the men who handled Him violently, returning their evil will with His good-will. He thus demonstrated His supreme power over them, the superiority of His decision over theirs. This means that He now comes to men (in His word) as the One who is both in their hands and yet supremely powerful for their good. He does not compel their response, but evokes it: it is their own, spontaneously their own. In this response they become themselves. He brings them to respond to Him with a measure of the freedom with which He responded to God. In other words, in the encounter with Him they are brought to participate in Him. This encounter must not be dissolved into participation only, since we cannot understand a man's response

to Christ unless we speak of the royal gentleness with which He encounters sinners and evokes their response.

In order to give a firm dogmatic basis to this responsibility of men as it relates to the superior divine decision, eschatology must be given a place in the doctrine of election.<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to give a place to the time during which men are encountered by Christ and called by Him to make use of the gift of eternal life. This is the time during which men either confirm or reject the divine decision concerning them. At the fulfilment of this time, Christ will return as Judge, judging men on the ground of their responsibility for His gift of eternal life.<sup>2</sup> The parables of the Kingdom demonstrate this. In the parable of the talents, for example, Christ gives gifts to men, gifts for which they are responsible. At His return He judges them according to their use of these gifts. Christ puts a gift in men's hands: as they use it responsibly they bring forth a rich harvest of eternal life, as they fail to use it they confirm themselves in death. The finished work of Christ does not make the final judgment unnecessary, but rather establishes it as the revelation of His value for men.

This responsibility placed in man's hands by Christ, and His return to judge that responsibility, points to the working out of divine election in man's decisions and life. There is an element in the parable of the separation of the

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1. Cf. E. Brunner, op.cit., p. 349.

2. McLeod Campbell's early sermons were collected under the appropriate title Responsibility for the Gift of Eternal Life (Macmillan and Co., London, 1873).

sheep and the goats in which predestination refers not to predestined persons but a predestined blessing on love to Christ and a predestined curse on isolation from Him. The love to Christ and the isolation from Him are not predestined but are the decision made by men. The 'blessed of my Father' (Matt. 25: 34) enter the inheritance prepared for them from the foundation of the world. But for whom is it prepared? Not for the elect but for those who have served Christ in His brethren. Who are the reprobate? The parable does not call them predestined men, but those men who isolate themselves from Christ by not serving Him. It is the refusal to serve Christ which is cursed. This kind of observation led Erskine of Linlathen to hold that the primary truth in election as it refers to man's destiny was not that there are predestined persons, but that there is a predestined blessing on serving Christ and a predestined curse on refusing Him.<sup>1</sup> While this cannot be all that needs to be said on this matter, this doctrine forms a healthy corrective to the theories of predestination which speak of predestined persons in such a way as to make the responsibility of men a mere formal assertion and not a deliberate self-alignment with the good, or an equally deliberate refusal of the good. Erskine's insight may be refined by pointing out that in the Matthean

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1. T. Erskine, The Doctrine of Election, pp. 30f. The crux of his argument is:

'This is the election, not that God hath appointed one man to be holy, and another man to be unholy, - one man to be saved and another to be lost; but that he hath declared that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God; that if any man will die with Christ he shall live with him, if any man will suffer with him he shall reign with him; he shall be a vessel fit to honour, meet for the Master's use.'



parable of the final judgment those who are accepted by the Father are those who live out their predestination while those who are rejected are those who refuse their predestination. This is not to say that all men are predestined in the sense of having a fixed destiny, but that Christ presents Himself to all men and calls them all through the circumambient conditions of their life (i.e., through the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, etc.). Men are surrounded by Christ and God makes provision for only one response of man, that of accepting Christ who is their life. Those who accept and those who refuse are confronted by the same 'drawing of love', by the same predestination of God to life; those who accept confirm their calling, those who refuse deny it. When Christ returns He reveals the use men have made of this predestination to life.

This eschatological judgment of the responsibility of men forms an essential part of the doctrine of election. It is a weakness in Barth's doctrine that he does not give this responsibility of men the place which it has.

##### 5. The goal of the superior divine election.

The lack noted in Barth's doctrine of election in section 4 above is a failure to allow the superior divine election to drive forward to its goal. His doctrine needs to show more clearly that the divine decision aims at the full maturity of men, at their responsible participation in the election by Christ of God. He has spoken very clearly about the fact that the goal of all God's ways and works is man,<sup>1</sup> but his insight needs to be developed.

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1. See previous chapter, p. 101. C.D. II/2, pp. 125-7 and 177-180.



In the doctrine of election and predestination a theologian is necessarily more concerned with beginnings than with ends, but ends cannot be ignored since predestination does, after all, imply the determination of an end, a destination, from the beginning. The New Testament leaves little doubt about the goal toward which election aims, e.g.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born of many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom. 8: 29-30)

Here it is perfectly clear that the purpose of God (cf. Rom. 8: 28: 'called according to his purpose.') is the conforming of the elect to the image of the Elect man. Barth is Pauline in his faithfulness to the centrality of Christ and to the fact that election is entirely in Christ (Paul uses the aorist for all the verbs relating to the elect (foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified), thus indicating that all these things have taken place absolutely, and if absolutely, where else but in Christ, to whose image the elect are to be conformed?). Yet Barth has too little to say about the working out of this purpose of God through the Christian's obedience in the Spirit, the obedience in which they are conformed to the image of the Son.<sup>1</sup> Also, Barth neglects the purpose of the Father: it is He who purposes the election in which the Spirit of sonship is sent forth

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1. Rom. 8. According to II Cor. 3: 18, Christians are being changed into the likeness (eikona) of the Lord and, according to the previous verse, the Lord is the Spirit: being conformed to Christ takes place through the activity of the Spirit.

into our spirits to bear witness with us that we are the children of God (Rom. 8: 15-16). What is needed is a development of Barth's own trinitarian theology in which he says: 'As Jesus Christ calls us and is heard by us He gives us His Holy Spirit in order that His own relationship with His Father may be repeated in us.'<sup>1</sup> Two developments of his doctrine of election are needed. The first is that his doctrine needs to be given a more thoroughly trinitarian form. It must not be denied that the Son is the electing God, but this doctrine itself must be given even stronger grounding by showing that He is the electing God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In this dynamic economy of God it becomes clear that the goal of all God's ways and works is the conforming of men by the Father to the image of the Son through the Spirit. Second, the doctrine of the humanity of the elder brother, of the first-born among many brethren, needs to be more thoroughly connected with the doctrine of the Spirit. Only then will it be clear that the election of God by the first-born is communicated to His brethren. If these two developments of Barth are carried through, it will become both intelligible and certain that the superior decision of God regarding man enables man to decide for God on his own part and so be conformed to the image of the Son.

The first of these developments calls for a development of the doctrine that Jesus Christ is the electing God. In the previous chapter it was argued that Barth holds that

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 780.

Christ is the electing God only as He is the obedient One.<sup>1</sup> This implies no diminution of His electing as the Subject of election, since Christ's obedience is genuine obedience and therefore genuinely His own act.<sup>2</sup> But the doctrine that Christ is obedient carries with it the doctrine of the election of the One to whom Christ is obedient, i.e., the Father. And if Christ as the One obedient to the Father fulfilled the divine election in the flesh, the Spirit now communicates this election to the flesh of other men, communicating it as the Spirit of obedience to both the Father who purposed the election and the Son who executed it. If the doctrine of Christ as the electing God is developed in this direction, His electing has more and not less meaning than Barth gives it. Christ, as the Subject of election, executed the Father's purpose in the first-born, and now sends forth the Spirit in His election of the many brethren. That Christ is the Subject of election within this divine economy of Father, Son and Holy Spirit means that election was executed in and through the first-born in order that it may reach and reside in the many brethren.

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1. See previous chapter, pp. 79ff.

2. Any weakening of Barth at this point would be a disaster. As the obedient One, Christ embodies in Himself the entire divine good-pleasure to all that is not God. Men are therefore elect in Him, not merely by means of Him. If this were compromised theology would be plunged back into the abyss of a divine will preceding the election of grace and into the despair of seeking the evidence of personal election either in an inscrutable divine will or in personal experience (and not in Christ). Cf. J.K.S. Reid, 'The Office of Christ in Predestination', Scottish Journal of Theology, I (1948), pp. 173ff.



Barth's doctrine of the electing God must be developed to the point that it is clear that it is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has chosen us:<sup>1</sup>

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ...even as he chose us in him... (Eph. 1: 3-4). It seems that Eph. 1: 3-4 is saying that God is the electing God in (at least) two modes: as God and the Father He originated the election of sinners, though, let it be stressed, He originated it only in counsel with God the Son; and as God the Son He embodied this election of the Father. God elected in these two modes in order that He may truly elect sinners to full sonship of Himself. Thus (1) God originated the election of sinners in His mode as Father and not as the Son in order that He might be the Father of His elect sons through His only-begotten Son. He did not originate the election of man as the Son because then He could not have been their Father. (2) God executed and embodied the Father's election in His being as the Son so that (a) even as the electing God He might be the Son of the Father and thus He might be what the elect men are, i.e., sons of the Father. And God executed the Father's election as the Son so that (b) He might embody God's electing in man, in human flesh and human sonship.

Before proceeding to an elucidation of this account of the electing God, two points need to be made.

1. The Holy Spirit is also the electing God, but it

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1. Cf. E. Buess, op.cit., pp. 48-52.



is not possible to speak of His electing until that of the Father and the Son have been indicated. The inner 'economy' of God Himself is such that He first gives Himself in the electing of Father and Son, and then, on the basis of this mutual giving in Father and Son (in which the Spirit gives Himself to Both), He gives Himself actually to indwell men, freely electing them in fulfilment of the electing of Father and Son. He is not also elected man as is the Son, but is electing God in such a way that He elects only together with bringing men to participate in the Son's election of the Father.

2. It may seem that this way of speaking is modalistic. This is not intended, although certain of the preceding formulations may seem to approach it. Modalism is anathema in this doctrine of the electing God because if, in the electing of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we have only modes of God's being, and not God Himself in His act as God, we do not truly encounter God in the electing of the Trinity. What is intended is that the one divine Subject acts in three modes, that of Father, Son and Spirit and that the one God acts in each mode, acting according to God's power to distinguish Himself from Himself<sup>1</sup> for the purpose He elects. In short, the one God distinguishes Himself from Himself while remaining identical with Himself for the purpose of accomplishing His good-will for man and in fact that the dwelling of God may be with man.

It will be noted that this brief account of the Trinity is very close to Barth's understanding. This makes it

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1. C.D. I/1, p. 363.

puzzling that Barth did not make the kind of development of his own doctrine of the electing God which has been suggested here. At the end of this chapter a couple of possible reasons for his not doing so are tentatively put forward.

It is now necessary to proceed to an elucidation of why this account of the electing God gives the humanity of Christ - and through His humanity, our humanity - its full place.

This may best be done by first noting a danger inherent in Barth's treatment of Jesus Christ as the electing God. To put it in its most extreme form, and in a manner unfair to Barth, though helpful for the purpose of making this point clear, Barth's doctrine seems to give the electing of the Son an element of self-origination. Because he does not clearly and firmly ground the electing of the Son in the electing of the Father - because the obedience of the Son's electing is not wholly the ground of His electing - the Son seems to be the Father of the election. To the extent that this danger is present, to that extent Jesus Christ ceases to be the Son, and to that extent He ceases to be the obedient One and to that extent also it becomes impossible for Him to be the obedient creature of God. To the extent that the electing of the Son originates with Himself and is not obedient to the Father, to that extent He cannot be at once the obedient Son of God and the obedient Son of man. He cannot be the one obedient Son of the Father since His electing as God of man takes place in a sphere removed from His electing as man of God - it takes place in a high exalted realm which does not coincide with the low, humble

realm of the obedient Son of man in His election of God. Put briefly, the danger is that the Son of God (who elects man) exists in a different sphere from that of the Son of man (who elects God): the unity of the Son of the Father is threatened, and thus also the being together of God with His children. Not only is the unity of the Son of God threatened, but His humanity comes to be thought of as different from ours - for, to the extent that humanity is joined with divinity that is not obedient, to that extent it is not humanity that is itself in obedience, and to that extent it is not our humanity.

Of course, Barth is careful to say nothing of this kind. As was noted in the previous chapter, the obedience of the Son, as electing God, to the Father, is important to him. Yet the danger just noted is by no means merely an idle speculation. Later in this study, in Chapter VII, it will be noted that there is in Barth's Christology a definite tendency to say that Christ's human nature was sinless and obedient due to its being the humanity of the Lord. While this is correct so far as it goes, Barth does not go on to show how the connection of the divine nature with the human nature was such that the human nature was in no way relieved of achieving its righteousness as human nature. In the previous chapter Barth was praised for his excellent account of the response of the humanity of Christ to God, but it must now be asked whether he has not left that account (for all its insight) hanging in the air. How did Christ's humanity carry through that perfect response? Barth does not say. He leaves the impression that Jesus perfected His response because He was also God, and does not indicate that



He did so in the power of the Holy Spirit, i.e., that He did so in the power by which other men may (but do not) perfectly respond to God. There is, then, a measure of truth in the suggestion that for Barth the Son of man elected God in a humanity not altogether the same as ours, i.e., in a humanity joined with the divinity of the Son not entirely conceived of as the divinity of the obedient Son of the Father.

It is now time to confront directly our difficulty with Barth's doctrine of the electing God. It is simply this: is not God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit the electing God? And is there not, originating with the Father, a specific function of electing performed by each person of the Trinity in order that God's electing of man may become man's electing of God? Does not Barth tend to close up the divine electing in the Son and hence tend to close up man's electing of God in the Son, not really allowing it to become the electing of God by other men?<sup>1</sup>

In the New Testament it is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who is in the first instance the electing God. It is God the Father who fathers the election in order that He may destine men to be His sons through His beloved Son Jesus Christ. Election originates in the Father since God wills to have sons: in this way God may be the Father of many sons through His only begotten Son. The Father's election is executed and embodied in the Son in order that God's election may be embodied in sonship, but what is in the

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1. Cf. H. Bouillard, op.cit., pp. 153-4.



Son does not reach sinners until God the Spirit communicates Christ to them. The Father's purpose does not reach its goal until the Spirit brings sinners to be adopted into His Son and in Him to share His electing of God. If theology speaks only of Jesus Christ and the union of God's election of man and man's election of God in Him, the impression is created that other men as it were share automatically in Him. Theology can give no convincing proof that God creates children who freely elect Him in love, that God has sons who freely imitate Him as Father. Barth is surely on good Biblical grounds to say that it is in Christ, the Son of God, that God posits the possibility of beings other than Himself who may love and choose Him, and he is surely also correct to say that every man is created in Him. The prologue to the Fourth Gospel witnesses to this (to say nothing of other passages of the New Testament). But if this means that men automatically, by virtue of their creation, share in Christ's election of God, then the very purpose of positing men as other than Himself is defeated. For God's purpose in electing men is that they elect Him, electing Him in a freedom and love corresponding to His election of them. They can imitate the free grace of God only if they do so freely. If theology is intelligently to witness to this, it must speak of the Spirit - the Spirit who brings men into Christ and does so not because men are automatically in Him by virtue of their creation by Him but because He takes the freedom which is in Him and brings men freely to love and choose the Father. Only if theology speaks of the Spirit will it be able to overcome the

suggestion that men somehow either automatically share in Christ's election of the Father, or (per impossible) have to choose God in their own freedom and strength.

It is now appropriate to consider the electing of the Spirit. It is only in His electing that God's electing reaches the individual, for, in the Spirit, the electing of the Father which was embodied in the electing of His obedient and only-begotten Son, now indwells many sons. Through the Spirit, the whole and undivided Trinity now indwells the individuals of the undivided body of Christ. The Spirit is competent to do this because, as the union of the Father and the Son even in the giving to dereliction of the cross, He is One in diversity, One in undivided self-giving to the many who are yet one in the body of the Father's Son. Further, since He is the Creator Spirit who proceeds from the resurrection of the Crucified, He baptises individuals into the death of their self-chosen individuality and recreates them into the true reciprocal individuality of the image of Christ, multiplying in them the life of Christ. Proceeding from both the Father and the Son, He is God giving Himself wholly and undividedly, delighting in their individuality as He brings them to participate in the Son's election of God. God the Spirit loves this particular man: He elects. 'The Holy Spirit communicates Himself to persons, marking each member of the Church with the seal of personal and unique relationship with the Trinity, becoming present in each person.'<sup>1</sup>

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1. V. Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (James Clarke, London, 1957), p. 168.

Through the Spirit, the unconditional election of grace, as embodied in the Son, breaks through into the inner centre of individuals who, indwelt with this love, find the courage for their own part to elect God.

As equal God with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is electing God. But He elects in obedience. As Acts 2 indicates, He elects under the Lordship of the One at the right hand of the Father. That is, He is under the Lordship of the Man Christ Jesus, the Man who, anointed with the Spirit, subdued all temptation and elected God in our humanity. He is therefore supremely gentle but also sovereign in His electing. His Lordship is supremely that of encounter, persuasion, courtesy and, even, service. His Lordship is equally divine with the Father and the Son, yet it is the service of God to man and can therefore courteously enter man's inner being, there to master him so that he for his part elects and serves God. As the Spirit exercises this Lordship, as God is subject in this mode, the inner riches of God are externalised (without ceasing to be His inner riches, i.e., without alienation) and God has fellowship with men and men have fellowship with God. The electing in obedience of the Son of the Father reaches its goal in the electing in obedience of the Spirit, for in the **encounter** of the Spirit with men, individuals other than Christ participate in Christ's election of the Father.

If this development of Barth's doctrine of the electing God is made, it becomes very clear that the whole triune God elects men and brings them to elect Him. What Barth states about man's participation in Christ is filled out to include



the electing of the Father and of the Spirit. By insisting on the trinitarian nature of divine election it is possible to give adequate basis to man's own election of God.

A second development of Barth's doctrine is needed, that of showing more clearly how the election of God accomplished in the human nature of Jesus Christ is communicated to other men. Barth is to be praised for giving an essential place in the doctrine of election to the response to God in the human nature of Christ, but it is not equally clear how this response can become that of other men. Barth says that men participate in Christ's prayer and resurrection, and that their election consists concretely of this participation.<sup>1</sup> But how is this possible for sinners? Only through the Holy Spirit. Barth has always argued that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ,<sup>2</sup> the Spirit of His self-communication, but unless he also shows that it was by the Spirit that Christ responded to the Father, he is unable convincingly to show how it is that the Spirit enables men to respond to the Father. There is no doubt that Barth holds that it is by the Spirit that sinners respond to God, yet this has the status only of an asserted doctrine and not of a proven truth unless it is shown that the Spirit first achieved this response in the humanity of Christ. Without this understanding of the Spirit's work in Christ, we are obliged to say both that Christ's human nature was in some sense different from ours and that the Spirit originates a work in the sinner which was

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 162; see Chapter II, pp. 88-9.

2. C.D. IV/2, 'The Direction of the Son', pp. 264-377.



not present in Christ. The first of these things denies the vere homo of Chalcedon and of orthodox Christology, the second denies the perfection of Christ's finished work. Barth would regard both of these positions with horror. He would reply to the first by saying that he does not deny Christ's full humanity, and that Christ's humanity differs from ours only in that His was sinless. True: but was He sinless by virtue of having any resources not available to other men? If He was sinless by virtue of drawing on resources not available to other men, He cannot be helpful to them. But if, on the other hand, He was sinless by virtue of the same powers in which other men may overcome sin, He is helpful to them, compassionate to them in their needy condition. Unfortunately Barth is not nearly as clear at this point as is necessary: he tends to attribute Christ's perfection to the fact that His humanity was the humanity of the Lord,<sup>1</sup> and he has very little to say about the work of the Holy Spirit in it. In reply to the second position (that the Spirit originates a work in the sinner not already complete in Christ) Barth would reply that he does not in fact regard Christ's work as incomplete and as needing completion by man's response. But Barth must still answer the question of how it is that Christ responds to God with a response that is available and helpful to sinners, i.e., a response which is both complete, perfect, and in which others can participate without bringing anything to add to it. In the final analysis Barth can give only a partial

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1. See Chapters VI and VII.

answer to this question, because he does not allow the Spirit to have an integral and essential place in the response of Christ to the Father. The doctrine of the Spirit as the self-communication of Christ lacks its roots in the work Christ completed in the strength of the Spirit. But if Barth had shown that Christ perfected His response to the Father through openness to the Spirit, the perfection of His response would be available to sinners, both because it was achieved in the same humanity and by the same resources as that of other men, and also because the Spirit who communicates this response has already completed this response in human nature. The Spirit would initiate no new work in the sinner, but would bring to its goal the work completed in Christ.

It is worth asking why Barth is unsatisfactory at this point. It may be due to a tendency to circumscribe the humanity of Christ - for all the profundity of his account of His response to God, he tends to regard this response as flowing from His being also the Lord rather than from His being filled with the Spirit. But it may also be due to his not having completely solved his doctrine of Deus pro nobis. While he is extremely illuminating about God's becoming man he is not nearly so penetrating about His self-giving as the Spirit. He does not show that the righteousness of God in which the Father gave His Son and the Son gave Himself completes itself in His self-giving as the Spirit. For as the Father gave what is as precious to Him as Himself, His only-begotten Son, and as the Son gave Himself, so also the Spirit gives nothing less than Himself as He enters sinful humanity

and radically converts it to God. This work is costly to the Spirit, since nothing could be more abhorrent to Him than sin, yet, precisely in His righteousness, and on the ground of the completed work of the Son, it is His pleasure to give Himself to sinners. He completes the self-giving of Deus pro nobis: for as, according to the Father's good-pleasure, the completed work of the Son for man aimed at God's dwelling in man, so the Spirit now communicates Christ to sinners so that, indwelt by Him, they themselves elect God.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SHAPE OF BARTH'S DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

The main thrust of Barth's doctrine of election is that God loves man as He loves Himself. His being for Himself is also His being for man. He elected man with the same ultimate seriousness as He elected Himself. God is truly Deus pro nobis.

Barth gives equal stress to God's being in His act. In His act in Jesus Christ He realised His being for us men. It is in eternity that He elected Himself for man, but it was in time and in flesh that He actualised this election.<sup>1</sup> This actualisation reached its climax in Jesus' self-giving on the cross, since there He gave His very being.

Further, it was not only that God gave Himself in Jesus, but also that man gave himself to God. On the basis of God's free election of Himself for man, man freely elected himself for God. In the history of Jesus Christ there was actualised the being of God for man and the being of man for God.

Barth did not fully develop this doctrine until he came to write the fourth and largest volume of the Dogmatics. Under the heading: 'The Doctrine of Reconciliation' he attempted a full treatment of the being together of God and man in the history of Jesus Christ. (By the history of Jesus Christ is meant not only His life until His ascension, but

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1. By this is not meant that God is potential being who actualised Himself by His act in time, but that He expressed His eternal being in act by His act in time.



also His continuing life with the Father and in His body, the Church.)

There is no need in this study to give an account of earlier protestant doctrines of man's reconciliation with God, but it will be helpful to point out some of their salient features, particularly as they compromise the fullness of that reconciliation. Barth was convinced that, for all their good intentions, protestant dogmaticians failed to see man's reconciliation with God in its own light. They focussed unsteadily on the central thing and so both the centre and its circumference were distorted. Instead of allowing Jesus Christ and the reconciliation in Him to be its own light, man and his problems took over as the centre and norm.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of sin preceded the doctrine of reconciliation, and it seemed that man's plight determined the content of Christ's work. Christ's person was separated from His work,<sup>2</sup> with the result that it became almost impossible to avoid the idea that Christ performed a work which exists somehow independently of Him, rather much as in economic theory the product of a man's labour is separable from him and may be transacted quite apart from him.

Failing to allow Jesus Christ to be the person He is, protestant theology operated with a concept of personal life in which personhood became a kind of discreet 'substance',

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1. C.D. IV/1, pp. 369-87.

2. ibid., pp. 127-8.

intrinsically private and separate from other persons.<sup>1</sup> It was unable to communicate its essential inner being to others. Influenced by Melancthon's Aristotelianism protestant theology came to think of Christ as the One who acquired certain 'benefits' for man. These benefits could be transferred to men and become his possession, e.g., man has justification, salvation, eternal life. Further, because Christ's person and work were separated, it came to seem that, although Christ alone had acquired benefits for man by His unaided work, man had to appropriate them. While faith was never called a work, it did become a 'condition' for salvation and in this sense something which man has to do before Christ's work can become his. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit (which was notoriously neglected)<sup>2</sup> ceased to be securely grounded in Christ's communication of His inner being to other men, and was confused with man's act of appropriating salvation. The doctrine of the person of Christ lost the dynamic, personal quality it undoubtedly had with Luther and Calvin, and presented Christ's life in terms of two successive states, i.e., the state of humiliation leading to the state of exaltation.<sup>3</sup> While this gave prominence to His cross as

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1. This is not Barth's point, but this understanding of personhood has been characteristic of much protestant theology. J. Macmurray, The Self as Agent (Faber and Faber, London, 1969) points out that modern philosophy has broken down the attempt of the older philosophies 'to conceive the Self on the analogy of the material world.' (p. 33).
  2. The doctrine of the Spirit was not neglected by Luther, Calvin, the writers of the Scots Confession and others in the early period of the reformation, but even so remarkable a document as the Heidelberg Confession has little to say of the Spirit. Neglect of the Spirit set in early in protestantism.
  3. C.D. IV/1, pp. 132-5.

the central point in His history, it made it difficult to see how at each point in His life He was both Lord and Servant, and how He was both in such a way that He carried through a work not for His sake ~~but~~ for others. This conception of Christ's humiliation and exaltation made it seem that Christ was first humble and then kingly; that He first fulfilled a work for man and then left behind His real involvement in man's humble condition, leaving His gifts to be distributed, certainly under His kingly rule, but by the Church and believers. It was forgotten that throughout the entire course of His life He was the Lord expressing Himself as a Servant and that He was the Servant exalted as the Lord, and that in this way He was the One who took man's servile condition into Himself in order to exalt man in Himself. It was therefore also forgotten that man comes to 'possess' the benefits of his new exalted position through participation in Christ. Dogmatics spoke of man's new standing because of Christ, and 'for Christ's sake' rather than of his justification in and through Christ in the power of the Spirit.

There was and is much valuable insight into man and his conversion<sup>1</sup> in these older dogmatics, but the one thing needful - that man is reconciled in and through Christ - is

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1. Cf. B. Citron, New Birth (University Press, Edinburgh, 1951), passim. This book understands conversion very differently from the present study: where it understands conversion as a pilgrimage towards union with Christ, this study understands it as sharing in what is already in Christ. Inevitably in Citron's work grace becomes to some extent separated from the person of Christ. Nevertheless, he has brought 'the evangelical doctrine of conversion in the protestant Fathers' to bear fruitfully on pastoral problems.



neglected. Indeed, so long as dogmatics made man and his need their organising principle it could only be obscured. Against all this Barth wished to find a way of treating man's reconciliation which would allow the centre to be the centre. If the centre shone clearly, everything else would be seen in its proper place. For Barth there can be no doubt what that centre is: if, as he argued in his doctrine of election, Jesus Christ in His cross and resurrection is the election of sinners by God and the election of God by sinners, Jesus Christ is the centre. He is the living being of God in His act for man, and it is in Him that man's reconciliation is actual. If Jesus Christ is allowed to be the One He is, then man also becomes the being he is. If Jesus Christ is the form and the content of the doctrine of reconciliation, man's reconciliation assumes its proper form and has its proper content.

This revolution which Barth proposed (C.D. IV/1, pp. 3-128) and carried through (the whole of Vol. IV) was simply this: Jesus Christ, according to His self-attestation, is the being together of God and man in reconciliation. Let Him be the One He is. Let the doctrine of reconciliation be shaped and filled by Him. Far from losing by this procedure, man gains. Jesus Christ is no 'private' person who excludes others from the space He occupies. On the contrary, living His life in the act of His self-actualisation,<sup>1</sup> He includes others in Himself, bringing them to actualise their lives in Him. He

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1. Cf. C. O'Grady, The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth (Chapman, London, 1968), p. 160.



communicates His inner riches to them in His Spirit so that they may live in Him as reconciled, true men. As He is Himself in freedom, so He calls them to be themselves in freedom. Barth has broken with the conception of personhood which conceived of it as though it were a spiritual substance excluding others from its place, and shows that Jesus Christ lives in the Christian and the Christian lives in Him.

[Jesus Christ] does not exist merely for Himself and to that extent concentrically, but,...in His prophetic work, in the calling of disciples and Christians, with no self-surrender but in supreme expression of Himself, He also exists eccentrically, i.e., in and with the realisation of the existence of these men, as the ruling principle of the history lived by them in their own freedom. (C.D. IV/3, p. 548)

Correspondingly,

[the Christian] cannot live for himself and to that extent concentrically, but,...without detriment to his humanity awakened rather to genuine humanity, he also exists eccentrically, in and with the realisation of his own existence, being received and adopted as an integral element in the life and history of Christ. (C.D. IV/3, p. 548)

It is through Christ's being in act, through His personal life, that He communicates His benefits to others and it is through their active participation in Him that they 'enjoy' them. Christ bore man's sin by including their sinful being in Himself, and thereby abrogated it on the cross; and He established man's new being by making room for us in His resurrection. Since this is true, the entire doctrine of reconciliation is the doctrine of Christ, for in speaking of Christ we must also speak of Christ in men and men in Christ. Since Christ is the One He is, how can one better speak of man than by speaking of his being and act in Him?

A number of observations about this revolution will help to clarify its significance for the doctrine of turning to God.

# 1. The Person of Christ

God is Deus pro nobis. Barth unfolds this doctrine in his doctrine of reconciliation by saying that the being of Jesus Christ is His being for us. He is not One who exists for Himself at the expense of others. He is Himself in His act of being for others. He loved others as Himself, giving Himself for them that they may find their being in giving themselves to Him.

In this light the three major perspectives from which He is to be known come into view. (a) He is the Lord who became a Servant. He did not will to be Himself, the Lord, for Himself, but willed to be Himself only as He willed the salvation of others. He was the Lord as He became the Servant who burdened Himself with the sin of others. He gained His life only as He lost it, and He gained it only as He brought with Him those who were lost.

Early in the chapter on Barth's doctrine of election it was observed that Barth's doctrine presents a radical answer to the belief of Sartre and others that being is primarily for itself and only secondarily and ambiguously for others. Barth's doctrine of God's being in His act, as this is expressed in reconciliation, extends his answer to the modern concept of being for itself. His doctrine - the Lord as Servant - confronts and undercuts the tradition running through Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Sartre which says that man is himself only when he throws off all service, all submission. As is well known, Hegel wished to include and not to exclude the other in the final synthesis of the self, but his seminal analysis of the slave who by his labour actually masters the masters indicates

that he regarded service not as a means of benefitting others but of including them in one's sphere of power.<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche made explicit this underlying contempt for service. Man is himself only as he transcends himself as he is,<sup>2</sup> overcoming both himself and those who would hold him to what he is. Barth could not have formulated a thesis which cuts more radically to the centre of modern man's self-assertion than this first part of his Christology: The Lord as Servant. Christ maintains Himself as the Lord precisely as He is also the Servant. He does this in order that He may bring His authority and power as Lord to alter effectively and to liberate the slaves of sin. He loves His enemies as Himself. He is the free Lord of love who became a servant that He might make the slaves of hatred what He is: those who love in freedom. It is certainly true that these others become His servants, and are included in His final 'synthesis', but they are included in Him as those who find their true being in Him. He is the place in which they have the sure ground on which to stand and to grow into full maturity.<sup>3</sup>

(b) The second perspective which opens up is that of Jesus Christ, the Servant as Lord. It depends on the first. If God has become man in order not to overcome man but to establish him on his own feet, the downward movement of God to man reaches its goal in the upward movement of man to God.

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1. G.W.F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Mind, trans. J.B. Baillie (rev. 2nd ed., (G. Allen and Unwin, London, 1949), pp. 237-9.

2. This is a major theme of Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

3. Barth gives particular emphasis to this in the third part of his doctrine of reconciliation.



This perspective is of the greatest importance for man's turning to God.

(c) All that needs to be said about the material content of man's reconciliation with God is included in these two perspectives, yet it must be made perfectly clear that there is in Jesus Christ not only this twofold vertical movement but also the outward movement of the God-man to others. He is the living union of the being of God and man. He lives, He acts, He is victorious and He moves out to conquer others. He conquers them in order to bring them to share His victory, to make them active workers in His victorious work of liberating all men. As the living union of God and man, He is the guarantor of man's future. He therefore calls men to live in the strength of His promise. His fullness does not deny men their life, but instead He gives them space, time and opportunity to leap out into the future which He pledges for them.

## 2. Why these three perspectives?

It is conceivable that Barth could have chosen different perspectives from those he actually has. Jesus Christ is infinitely rich with fullness (plērōma) which meets every human possibility at its deepest level. While remaining faithful to his determination to allow Jesus Christ to be the light which illuminates both Himself and the men who look to Him, Barth could have employed other perspectives. Calvin, for example, chose the three offices of Christ<sup>1</sup> as the most appropriate categories in which to allow Christ's light to reach the needs

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1. The offices of Prophet, Priest and King, Institute II, 15.



of his generation. For Barth also, the story of Christ must be told three times from different perspectives. Yet the question remains: granted that Christ needs to be seen from a number of different perspectives, why did Barth choose these three? The answer may lie in this direction. Calvin answered the desire of the humanists of his day for a full humanity by witnessing to Christ as the Prophet, Priest and King, who, in these three offices, fulfilled for men all that he needs. In opposition to a false Church which claimed that man (in the Church) could attain to salvation for himself, Calvin witnessed to Christ in whom this salvation was already present for man. Barth is in substantial agreement with Calvin, but since the Enlightenment man has enlarged the dimensions in which he understands himself. In particular, the perspectives of man's subjectivity and his future have opened up.<sup>1</sup> History, evolution, development, process, growth, etc. have become central in a way in which they were not in Calvin's time. Existentialism and eschatology in theology have attempted to take account of these new dimensions but, as Barth has often argued, these orientations have not succeeded in doing justice to Christ. In the modern combination of existentialism and eschatology, Christ is said to have done a work in the past which creates for us only the possibility of life.<sup>2</sup> It remains for us, in our existential decisions of faith, to realise that possibility and to act in the present

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1. See Chapter I.

2. C.D. IV/1, p. 285. R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. 1, trans. K. Grobel (S.C.M., London, 1952), p. 302.

for the future. Barth opposed this theology and tried to give a more adequate answer to the contemporary need.

Looking to Christ, Barth saw again the reality spoken of in the fourth Gospel: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.' (Jn. 1: 51). With Irenaeus and Athanasius, Barth saw the twofold movement of God to man and of man to God as it is perfect in the Son of man. In Him all creation is held together and the new creation is already a reality. Apart from any effort on the part of fallen man, God and man are united, without confusion or alteration, in the person of Jesus Christ. The new creation is objectively real in Him, and therefore it is not a matter of our making it real by our decision, but of accepting Him and actively living in Him. Far from by-passing man's subjectivity and collapsing eschatology into an already completed future, this classical Christology made both subjectivity and eschatology essential. Since Jesus Christ is objectively personal, men subjectively participate in Him only by a personal relationship with Him; and since He wills fully to reveal the new creation in Him only at the completion (sunteleisthai, Mk. 13: 4) of the present age, men are called to live in hope, and therefore in increasing purity (I Pet. 1: 3-9; 2 Pet. 1: 3-11). Yet these rich insights into man's situation needed development in order to meet the demands of modern thought. Barth believed that the basic categories of classical Christology were to some extent at least

bound to a static ontology.<sup>1</sup> He believed that the being of Christ can be adequately described only in the language of a dynamic, actualist ontology.<sup>2</sup> Taking up an insight of Calvin, Barth speaks of the two natures of Christ only as they are expressed in the movement of His history.

If we study what Calvin tells us of Christ, we shall notice that he does not give us any abstract definitions of his manhood and his Godhead, nor of their relations. But he shows us the succession of the FACTS.... Calvin invites us to follow these facts. He bids us enter into the history of Christ. The same holds for Christ as it does for a bird in full flight. No picture will convey that flight, except a moving picture. Likewise in theology. You must follow the positions, follow the assertions and view the whole, not as if it were a system, but as a history. And Christians are members of the cast of that history. And their small stories exist only as referring to that great history. For this reason, Calvin does not expound an explicit doctrine of the two natures of Christ. Instead he treats them as he proceeds along the movement of the question: How can he be called Son of God, since we are children of God?.... Calvin does not tell us what Christ is but what he does. He does not tell us of his being without telling us of his life. He does not tell us of his person without telling us of his office.  
(The Faith of the Church, pp. 47-8)

In other words, God's being is dynamic, and He expresses Himself in His movement toward man, a movement which brings man into movement with Him. Barth develops this insight (which is itself a development of patristic Christology). The three great volumes of Christology in the Dogmatics parallel Calvin's account of the three offices of Christ, but Barth shows more fully than Calvin that the dynamic being of Christ (His being in His act) calls into being a corresponding movement in the

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1. C.D. IV/2, p. 26. Cf. the very powerful arguments of K. Kitamori, The Theology of the Pain of God (S.C.M., London, 1966), pp. 46-9, 121-3.
  2. This point is made strongly in E. Jüngel, Gottes Sein ist im Werden, J.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1967), passim.



being of man. Each volume concludes with a discussion of man's act (faith, love and hope) in the Spirit of Christ. Thus Barth meets and answers the modern perception into the reality of the human subject. Barth also meets and answers the modern perception into the reality of man's future, his eschatology. He develops the understanding of Christ's prophetic office to the point where it is possible to see that the fullness of the new creation already present in Christ becomes the starting-point for man's projection of himself into the future, the future which Christ unfolds to him. The Christian follows Christ as His active servant, thus participating in Christ's prophetic progress through history.

It is in this way that Barth has made the insights of classical Christology directly relevant to the post-Enlightenment concentration on subjectivity and history as eschatology. But it still remains to be shown exactly in what way the three perspectives Barth has chosen engage with this post-Enlightenment perception of man's possibilities.

If the analysis of the modern cultural situation given in the first chapter of this study is fundamentally correct, three things need to be said about man's subjectivity and history.

(a) If it is the case that post-Enlightenment thought is obsessed with the problem of a starting-point, of that on which to base itself, and therefore also the problem of man's innocence and his right to be the ground of his project in life,<sup>1</sup> Barth has met this concern with the doctrine of God's

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1. Many instances could be cited, but particularly notable is the Hegelian preoccupation with the presuppositionless moment; see Chapter I. Also, J. Collins, The Mind of Soren Kierkegaard (Henry Regnery, Chicago, 1965), pp. 110-1.



movement toward man in Jesus Christ. In this self-humbling God has given man a sure foundation for his own standing in life. He is given the innocence which he cannot provide for himself. In this act of God, in which He is the Subject, man is established as an acting subject.<sup>1</sup> This happens in man's own act of faith. Thus, what is acceptable in the modern belief that man is constituted man not as substance but as subject is recognised and redeemed.<sup>2</sup>

(b) If it is also true that modern man understands himself as the actor and in a certain sense as the creator of Himself and his history, Barth has met this belief with the doctrine of the movement of man to God in Jesus Christ. In this movement man is given a sure basis for his own act and work. He builds himself up in love.<sup>3</sup> As he participates in Christ he grows in love. Thus, what is acceptable in the modern belief that man must create his own life (realise himself) is recognised and purified.

(c) If it is further the case that post-Enlightenment man aims himself toward a teleological fulfilment of his self-actualisation in his self-fulfilment, Barth has answered this expectation with the doctrine that Jesus Christ is the promise, guarantor and content of man's future. In Christ God and man are united in plenitude of being, and united actively. Christ does not immediately place men at the goal of their journey, but gives them space, time and opportunity to live and

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1. C.D. IV/1, pp. 749ff.

2. N. Berdayev, Spirit and Freedom, trans. O.F. Clarke, (G. Bles, London, 1935), Chapter I, passim.

3. This is fundamental to Barth's doctrine of the Church, C.D. IV/2, pp. 641ff.

realize their being in Him.<sup>1</sup> He even makes them necessary<sup>2</sup> to His prophetic progress through history. As the Mediator in whom true God and true man are united, He comes to men and unites them with Himself in order that they may unite themselves in Him.<sup>3</sup> He calls them to Himself, and as they follow Him they move towards the fulfilment of their being in Him. It is thus the final triumph of the grace of God in Jesus that God has made their fulfilment necessary to His fulfilment. What is acceptable in the hope of Hegel and others, that man would realise his subjecthood in a fulfilment in which God also would find His fulfilment,<sup>4</sup> is here recognised, chastened and redeemed.

These three points indicate that Jesus Christ gives man all that he needs for his project in life: the first concerns the basis on which he stands, the second the act he makes on that basis and the third the goal for whose realisation he posits and activates himself. These three dimensions coincide in every moment of man's new life in Christ, but this study is concerned only with their intersection in man's initial step toward God, i.e., in the transition from dead works to the living God, conversion. Thus, conversion will be studied from three perspectives: first, its basis in justification; then its act of turning in the first moment

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1. C.D. IV/3, pp. 274-367.

2. See Chapter VIII, pp. 330-1.

3. C.D. IV/3, pp. 543-5.

4. The final stages of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind argue that in man's self-consciousness Spirit comes to full knowledge of itself. Cf. Coleridge in Frost at Midnight: 'God...who from eternity doth teach Himself in all.'

of sanctification; and, finally, its projection towards its goal as Christ's calling is heard. But since these three dimensions of the one happening are actual only as a man participates in Christ, it will first be necessary to study Christ in His three dimensions of Judge, King and Prophet. By means of this procedure it is hoped that a complete picture of Barth's understanding of conversion will emerge.

### 3. The Atonement as the self-realisation of God's being for man.

Barth's resolute intention to allow Jesus Christ to be the One He is, and so to allow the atonement to be seen in its own light, means that the doctrine of man's reconciliation with God is liberated from sub-personal concepts. His account of the atonement as the satisfaction<sup>1</sup> and fulfilment of God's being in free love for man makes it clear that God was not conditioned into saving man, but that He expressed and carried into effect His personal love for man. He was not bound by laws and by necessity. Rather, He fulfilled the

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1. Consider the following extraordinarily powerful passage in which God's satisfaction of Himself in regard to us is also the satisfaction of our being:

Weil Gott ist, darum hat und übt er die Kraft als dieser Mensch die Folge unserer Übertretung, den Zorn und die Strafe, die uns treffen mussten, für uns Alle zu erleiden und so sich selber uns genug zu tun. Und wieder weil er Gott ist, hat und übt er auch die Kraft, als dieser Mensch an unser Aller Stelle sein eigener Partner zu sein, der der Bestimmung des Menschen zum Heil, der wir Alle widersprechen, in freiem Gehorsam gerecht wird und so also uns genug d.h. auch das für uns positiv Genügende zu tun....Es [das christliche Botschaft] meint den Frieden, den Gott selbst in diesem Menschen zwischen sich selbst und uns Allen Gestiftet hat. (K.D. IV/1, p. 12).



'law' of His own being,<sup>1</sup> and freely 'bound' Himself in love. The atonement is thus to be understood only in terms of the movement of God Himself, the movement of His perfectly free loving.

The entire meaning of the atonement is the fulfilment of a personal relationship.<sup>2</sup> It is God with us: Immanuel. It is the fulfilment by Immanuel of the covenant of God with man, the covenant which man broke. It is the costly fulfilment of God's good-pleasure to have man as His own partner. Thus, all the forensic and cultic language in which the atonement is conceptualised must serve only to witness to this personal relationship.<sup>3</sup>

The doctrine of man's turning to God has been cramped by ideas which imply the fear that God is not wholly and completely loving toward man. This fear is not, of course, expressed in so many words, but the structure of the doctrine and the content given to some of its key concepts betray such a doubt.<sup>4</sup> It is thought that God's being the One He is, and therefore His righteousness, is His being for Himself

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1. C.D. IV/1, pp. 529ff.

2. For Barth the atonement is the fulfilment of the broken covenant, the covenant whose content is: 'I will be their God and they shall be my people.' See esp., C.D. IV/1, pp. 3-78.

3. Cf. R.A. Bagnato, 'Karl Barth's Personalising of Juridical Redemption', Anglican Theological Review XLIX, Jan. 1967, pp. 49-69, esp. p. 61.

4. This is particularly evident in the common procedure of laying down first of all the doctrines of sin, law and satisfaction and only afterward the doctrine of Christ. In this way the love of God in Christ is conditioned by prior considerations of law and justice.



and only secondarily and less seriously His being for man. God does not love us as Himself, but first loves Himself and only as a generous after-thought loves us.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere is this doubt of God more clearly evident than in some theories of the atonement. God's being, and the righteousness in which He expresses His being, are not understood solely in the light of God's demonstration of them in Jesus Christ. Certain concepts of being, righteousness and personhood are projected into God's act in Christ.

The man who doubts that God's being is identical with His love for man, i.e., fallen man, inevitably conceives of his own being as insecure and constantly under threat.<sup>2</sup> Since he believes that he is not completely protected by God, he thinks that he must maintain his own being by acts of self-preservation directed toward himself. He thinks of himself and his righteousness as that which is fundamentally for itself. He cannot avoid impersonalising his personal being. To some extent at least he must conceive of his personhood by analogy with the sub-personal creation, the creation which excludes

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1. McLeod Campbell speaks of certain kinds of Calvinism making justice a necessary attribute of God while love is only an arbitrary attribute. The Nature of the Atonement (J. Clarke, London, 1959), p. 63.
  2. It would be possible to give a brief history of the concept of personhood, tracing it from Greek thought through Augustine, Boethius, Richard of St. Victor to Idealism, Buber, existentialism and modern psychology. It is more to the present purpose, however, to indicate the origin of sub-personal concepts of personhood in the anxiety which fallen man feels in relation to himself, his neighbour and God.

other things from the space it occupies. He cannot avoid this, since, in order to preserve himself intact from what he interprets as the threat of others, he must anxiously hold himself as a private place where others are excluded or admitted only on special terms. Others are welcome only as he needs them, and they easily become transgressors - they violate his right to himself. Even when Idealism replaced notions of spiritual substance with those of subject and spirit, the person was still thought of as excluding others. It was thought of as the act in which a person says 'I am I', positing itself in isolation.<sup>1</sup> Position implied negation. Even worse than this necessarily happens. When man believes he must maintain his being by his own action, the threats which others pose to him become threats to his very being, and he retaliates against any transgression. Others must 'pay' for their offence. Forgiveness becomes impossible. These ideas are read into God's being and His act of reconciliation. He is thought of as being for Himself, jealously defending His honour. His righteousness demands retaliation. Forgiveness in its proper sense is denied. God does not give Himself to the offender in the sense of for-give, Ver-geben, but He demands payment from him.

In the Dogmatics God's being is identical with His love

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1. This is a major theme of J. Macmurray, op.cit., e.g. p. 31: 'Modern philosophy is characteristically egocentric. I mean no more than this: that firstly, it takes the Self as its starting-point, and not God or the world or the community; and that, secondly, the Self is an individual in isolation, an ego or "I", never a "thou".'

for man. God acted out His being in His Son as His being for man. (There is an important sense in which God is primarily for Himself and secondarily for man, but this happens for man's good.<sup>1</sup> It is on the basis of His being for Himself that He is for man. It is only as He maintains Himself as Himself, not abandoning Himself but confirming Himself, that He is the transcendent God who is the archimedian point from which the human situation can be radically altered.)

It is in this sense that God's being is personal being. His being is turned toward us and He relates Himself to us. (This is why Barth resists every form of modalism. Modalism would make God's turning to man merely a persona of God, merely an appearance of God, and not the expression of Himself.<sup>2</sup> In Biblical language, God has turned His face toward us.

Once it is seen that it is with this God that we have to do, the sheer glory of the atonement comes into view. Man's sin is offence to this God who faces us, and yet He does not retaliate but gives Himself. He forgives the men who offend Him. Barth loves to say that God overflows<sup>3</sup> and superabounds<sup>4</sup> in mercy. Without ceasing to be Himself, but in faithfulness to Himself, He overflows, giving Himself in forgiveness. Atonement is the personal act of God.

1. C.D. IV/1, pp. 559-68.

2. C.D. IV/1, p. 196f.

3. Cf. Chapter II, pp. 205f. C.D. II/2, p. 125.

4. Barth emphasises this in Christ and Adam, trans. T.A. Smail, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, No. 5 (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1956).



It is necessary to make this point at some length because often in the history of theology the relationship between God and man has been understood as though ideas of law, righteousness and contract determined that relationship. It is well known, for example, that within Calvinism there grew up a theology which described the fellowship between God and man almost entirely in legal and forensic categories.<sup>1</sup> What Barth has against this theology is not that these categories were used - his own doctrine of Christ for us centres on the judgment of Christ in our place - but that these categories came to assume a certain validity independent of the relationship they were intended to describe. Once they came to assume this status they covertly made possible and even necessary man's own initiative before God. Under the cover of a rigorous system of doctrine whose watchword was 'justification by faith', men began to limit God's grace and to make their own anxious works necessary for the enjoyment of His favour. God's grace was impersonalised and men therefore felt that they must have some claim on Him before they could be sure of His love.

Since this feeling that God's grace is somehow distant and impersonal, and must be secured by man's act, is the most damaging and yet persistent obstacle to man's turning to God, it is worth looking briefly at the main elements in it.

(a) It is thought that God and man stand before each other 'neutrally' and that man must prove his righteousness before he is acceptable to God. God puts man on trial and

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1. Barth's assessment of the value of Federal theology is to be found in C.D. IV/1, pp. 54-66.



will accept him on condition of his proving himself worthy of it. According to Federal theology, this was the purpose of the covenant of works. God promised Adam eternal life on condition of obedience.

(b) It is thought that Christ fulfilled the law which Adam broke, and so established man's claim to eternal life. Although it is a manifestation of His free grace that He does this, it is the covenant of works which He fulfilled and so it is impossible to escape the idea that it is by works - albeit the works of Christ - that man stands in God's favour.

(c) It is thought that men now enter into God's grace if they repent and believe. It is difficult to avoid the idea that it is by repentance and faith that one becomes worthy of grace. For if man must first establish a claim to God's grace, and if Christ has done this by His work on man's behalf, it seems appropriate that men should establish their 'interest' in Him by their own work of repentance and faith.<sup>1</sup> Of course, repentance and faith were never actually called works, but they were thought of as means of controlling God's grace. Since God and man at first stand related neutrally and man must establish his claim on God by righteous works, faith as such can never be that which God reckons as

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1. Cf. J. Fraser of Brae, A Treatise of Justifying Faith (Edinburgh, 1679), p. 13: '...how flat and dull make they the business and mystery of the Gospel, who maintain that as the Lord required perfect Obedience, as the Condition of the first Covenant, so he requireth a cordial assent to the truths of the Gospel, and a sincere Obedience flowing therefrom, as the Condition of the Second Covenant.'

righteousness.<sup>1</sup> God's grace has been limited and distanced by the concept of law and so it is not simply by trusting God that man is righteous. Faith must be that act of man which makes it legally possible for Him to impute righteousness to him, and hence it must have the character of an act which satisfies legal requirements.

Barth's answer to this depressing kind of theology is simply that God has always been gracious to men. From eternity, in and with the election of Himself, He has loved man as Himself. Man does not have to establish his claim to grace. He is not separated from God by law. On the contrary, God has fulfilled the law of His being, and has done it in pure grace. Man may therefore find himself in a righteous relationship with God simply by trusting Him as the One He is.

A short account of Barth's doctrine of God's reconciliation of man to Himself will underline the intensely personal nature of God's love for man as he understands it.

From the beginning God's whole being has aimed at man. In Himself, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, He has that 'structure'<sup>2</sup> whereby He is both love in Himself and also free to love that which He posits outside Himself. As was shown in Chapter II of this study, Barth's doctrine of election

1. i.e., it is not simply by trusting God's righteousness that man is accounted righteous. If God is neutral towards man, faith in Him is not righteousness. Man must work to make himself righteous. But since God is not neutral toward man, to trust Him as righteous is to enter into a right relationship with Him and therefore is properly accounted as righteousness. Cf. Rom. 4.

2. K.D. I/1, p. 333: 'Gestalt.'

means that from eternity, at the beginning of all His ways and works, God determined Himself for fellowship with man and man for fellowship with Himself. This self-determination of God was a real and costly event in God Himself: He 'bound and pledged [verbunden und verpflichtet] Himself originally to man, choosing and determining and making Himself the God of man.'<sup>1</sup> Both the creation and the covenant exist for the purpose of the fellowship between God and man. Sin, therefore, was primarily the breaking of fellowship. It was also the breaking of the covenant and transgression of the law, but this only served to underline its nature as a personal offence against God.

God's reaction to this broken fellowship was to remove the obstacle to fellowship. He aimed to secure peace between Himself and man. He did this by coming on the scene in person. He did nothing rash or arbitrary, nothing on the spur of the moment which would only have patched up the broken relationship. On the contrary, He came in the freedom of His being, doing that to which He had pledged Himself from eternity. He gave Himself. He interceded in person, going to the depths of man's lostness, there to find and rescue man. His intercession for man was successful because He defended His own honour and glory. Man was lost and cursed because he had offended God's glory. Therefore, it was only by a superabounding display of His glory that He could restore man to honour. Offending man could be saved

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 37; K.D. IV/1, p. 38.



only if God affirmed His honour by displaying it at the very place of offence and so proving His freedom to forgive the offence. In defence of His wounded honour and for the sake of increasing His glory in the world, God proved His glory as God by giving Himself up to the shame and dishonour of offending man. It is not straining Barth's meaning to say that he sees God's work of reconciliation in terms of the most personal passion within God Himself.<sup>1</sup> God is love, but man has offended Him. His love must therefore flame out as His wrath. But God propitiated His wrath against sin and the sinner by fulfilling that wrath as the fire of His love, Himself bearing the sin and the wrath due to it, thus concluding peace with His enemies. He defended His wounded honour by displaying His forgiveness,<sup>2</sup> Himself bearing the insult and its wound, thus absorbing it and defending the honour of His defamers. In the language of Deutero-Isaiah, 'the Lord laid on [Christ] the iniquity of us all.' But Christ is very God and therefore it was God Himself bearing away our iniquity, burdening Himself with it, and so embracing the sinner into Himself.

What of the fulfilment of this will of God for fellowship with man? Man is a sinner whose sin aimed at wounding

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1. Jesus Christ offered Himself 'as the sacrifice which had to be made when God vindicated Himself in relation to man, ...choosing to suffer the wrath of God in His own body and the fire of His love in His own soul.' C.D. IV/1, pp. 94-5.
  2. '...where sin took the upper hand [God's] grace did not cease or retire, but overflowed in the form of avenging righteousness, showing itself to be super-abounding (Rom. 5: 20), so that in face of this opposition His forgiveness was His iron sceptre, His weapon, His sword of justice.' ibid., pp. 487-8.



God's honour. But God has pardoned him. God has borne away his sin, destroying his sinful being in Christ's death. He has established man's righteousness, giving him new being in Christ's resurrection. Therefore, all he must do is to accept his place in Christ.

Barth's conception of God's act in the atonement is rather different from what we find in Anselm's well-known Cur Deus Homo, and a very brief comparison will draw out a point of considerable importance for this study. Anselm and Barth operate with the same general picture of the atonement as the restoration of a broken relationship. For Anselm as for Barth it is a matter of God in His being as God, but they radically diverge in their understandings of God's action in defending His honour.<sup>1</sup> According to Anselm, God defended His wounded honour by demanding satisfaction from man. It is true, of course, that Anselm makes it unambiguously clear that God alone could and did make satisfaction on man's behalf, but it is also true that he regards God's act in Christ as a satisfaction made by man to God. It was for this reason that God became man. The opposite is the case for Barth. God defended His wounded honour, not by demanding satisfaction from man, but by satisfying His love for man by Himself bearing away the obstacle (sin) to His love. Where Anselm thinks of man paying God what he owes, Barth thinks of God giving Himself

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1. C.D. IV/1, pp. 485-7. Barth locates his divergence from Anselm in terms of their different understandings of God's reaction to man's offensive action.

to man in forgiveness. According to Barth, the payment of man's debt to God was God's forgiveness.

It could be objected that this account overstates the difference between Anselm and Barth and is rather unfair to Anselm. It must be said in Anselm's favour that he did understand that God not only demands but also saves by His honour (Proslogium IX). Also, the entire thrust of Cur Deus Homo is that God, and He alone, of His free grace, made satisfaction for man. Yet at the crucial point, in his description of Christ's work on the cross, he is unable to say that God interceded for man, that He forgave sin. Anselm says that man in the God-man payed what he owes, not that God on the cross forgave sin by bearing it away. Strictly, there is no forgiveness in Cur Deus Homo: there is only the payment of a debt.<sup>1</sup> There is a very serious impersonality in this book. Concepts of law and honour, necessary and proper in themselves, come between God and man, and so obscure the very personal act of God in forgiveness. Barth lays his finger on this when he points out that Anselm does not believe that it would be worthy of God to forgive 'out of sheer mercy.'<sup>2</sup> Boso asks Anselm why 'a free forgiveness is unworthy of God when He demands that we should forgive those who sin against us omnino, purely, absolutely and unconditionally.'<sup>3</sup> Anselm believes he can answer this by saying that it is not for us but God only to exact retribution. Boso

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1. Cf. G.S. Hendry, The Gospel of the Incarnation (S.C.M., London, 1959), p. 101.

2. ibid., p. 486.

3. ibid., p. 486.

further asks whether God's mercy 'can be measured by any other standard than that of His own free will which, because it is His, is righteous of itself'.<sup>1</sup> Anselm replies that God is free only to do what is proper to Him as God, and that it would not be proper for Him to forgive without a prior fulfilment of what His honour as God demands. But in replying in this fashion, has not Anselm set up his own concept of what is worthy of God, and thus obscured God's 'pure, absolute and unconditional forgiveness, His forgiveness sola misericordia?'<sup>2</sup> Has not Anselm made Jesus Christ no more than the One who makes it possible for God to forgive, and failed to allow Him to be the full actuality of the grace of God?<sup>3</sup> In other words, has not Anselm obscured the fact that Jesus Christ is Himself the Word of divine forgiveness, and that He is the effective Word of forgiveness spoken from the heart of God?

Barth's correction of Anselm is of great importance for the doctrine of turning to God. Anselm's doctrine makes it seem that there was an element in God unwilling to forgive, and that Christ had to come in order to make it possible for Him to do it. This casts a shadow across our trust in God, since it seems that God's inner being is not turned to us and is not wholly gracious. Barth's more precise doctrine removes this shadow, and points to God's pure, unconditioned forgiveness. The God Barth speaks of may be trusted with unbounded confidence. He has turned to us in pure forgiveness

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1. ibid., p. 487.

2. ibid., p. 487.

3. ibid., p. 487.



and so we have confidence to turn to Him without fear.

Barth's account of the atonement is closer to Calvin's than to Anselm's.<sup>1</sup> With Calvin, Barth emphasises Christ's unreserved entrance into the human condition and His descent into the depths of human sin in order to suffer for man. Christ was made sin; He was judged in our place. He bore our punishment.<sup>2</sup> Yet Barth is clearer than Calvin as to the meaning of this punishment. It was not God's punishment of sin in the sense of expending the force of His vengeance against sinners, as it sometimes seems to be in Calvin.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it was God's judging our sin and putting it to death, taking it into Himself in order to burn it away in His wrath, which is the fire of His love. For Barth it is true to say that Christ was punished as our substitute, but he means that Christ has united Himself with our sinful being in order utterly 'to make an end of us sinners and therefore of sin itself.'<sup>4</sup> Thus, Barth is speaking of the opposite

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1. P. van Buren notes that Calvin's use of the word satisfaction is to be distinguished from the idea of equality or compensation that is to be found in Anselm: Christ in our Place (Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1957), p. 76. For Calvin 'satisfaction means that the obedient suffering of Christ in our place is completely efficacious and sufficient.'
  2. ibid., Chapter IV.
  3. One must put the emphasis on the 'seems to be' but, even so, there is a disturbing element in Calvin. His use of the idea of vengeance is particularly troublesome. A characteristic passage is the following: 'In order to interpose between us and God's anger, and satisfy his righteous judgment, it was necessary that [Christ] should feel the weight of divine vengeance.' Institute, II, 16, 10. Calvin does, however, say that God does not demand vengeance in the same way as sinful man, Sermons on Isaiah 53, trans. T.H.L. Parker (James Clarke, London, 1956), p. 72.
  4. C.D. IV/1, p. 253.



of punishment as retaliation for sin. He is speaking of punishment as the suffering of what was necessary in order to destroy sin and the sinner. Although this seems to be the basic meaning of Christ's being punished in our place in Calvin, Calvin does sometimes speak of Christ bearing a punishment which reconciled God to us.<sup>1</sup> In these cases punishment seems to mean something like appeasement, and (though it is notoriously difficult to interpret Calvin correctly) we are again faced with the terrifying thought of a hostile, unforgiving, vengeful element in God.<sup>2</sup>

Later in this study it will be suggested that, following Barth's lead, it is possible to purify further Calvin's understanding of Christ's suffering in our place. Neither Calvin nor Barth spoke of Christ's sufferings as His holy sorrow over sinners. If it is possible that God's intercession for man can be described in even more richly personal terms than does Barth, it may also be possible to describe

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1. Many instances could be cited, e.g., 'under the Law [Christ] was typified by sacrifices, to inspire believers with the hope that God would be propitious to them after he was reconciled by the expiation of their sins.' Institute, II, 17, 4. Calvin was aware of the difficulty involved in saying that God is reconciled to us: see, ibid., II, 16, 2. Nevertheless, the New Testament never says that God was reconciled to us: the consistent affirmation is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.
  2. However Calvin may be interpreted, the following words of van Buren are apposite:  
It would be highly inaccurate to ascribe to Calvin that popular misconception of the Atonement according to which an angry God exacts the poind of flesh due to Him....There is a wrath of God, and man has certainly incurred that wrath, but to reduce the doctrine of the Atonement to something so cold and impersonal as the idea of satisfying an angry God is incompatible with Calvin's teaching. (op.cit., pp. 57-8).

the conversion to God of those who participate in Christ in more fully personal terms.

It has been argued that Barth has revolutionised the theology of reconciliation by allowing Jesus Christ to be the One He is, and that this means (1) that His person includes others in Himself in such a way that they participate in Him as true persons; (2) that He opens up for men the dimensions of their personhood and gives them the basis on which to work and to live; and (3) that in Him the personal God satisfies Himself in relation to sinful man so that man himself is satisfied. In Jesus Christ God's eternal covenant is fulfilled and the purpose of creation also fulfilled: the dwelling of God is with man. This is objectively and ontologically true in Christ.

What is objectively true in Christ flows over and becomes subjectively true of other men. This happens in His Spirit. This means nothing less than repentance. In the measure that man has sought to 'absolve' himself from God he has made himself his own absolute, but Barth's revolution means that Jesus Christ by His Spirit is Lord, the absolute sole Master. It means abandoning trust in ourselves and committing ourselves to Another. But, as Barth says, we know into whose hands we are committing ourselves: He is the One who has given Himself for us. We therefore dare to allow Him to master us.

## CHAPTER V

### THE INTERCESSION OF GOD

Barth's great discussion of the obedience of the Son of God speaks of God's own personal intervention on behalf of sinful man. It describes this intercession of God in three basic stages. First, in becoming man and a servant, God did not abandon His divinity. On the contrary;

God shows Himself to be the great and true God in the fact that He can and will let His grace bear this cost (i.e., the cost of making man's situation His own), that He is capable and willing and ready for this condescension, this act of extravagance, this far journey. (C.D. IV/1, p. 159)

Second, God as man was judged in our place in such a way that He destroyed sinful man and established his righteousness. Third, God the Father vindicated this work of His Son in such a way that men may participate in the new being of man in Him. In short, God became man in order to take responsibility for His guilty creature and radically to alter his situation from within that situation.

In the following account of Barth's section 'The Obedience of the Son of God', attention will be directed chiefly to Barth's treatment of Christ's taking our place. It will be shown that his doctrine of substitution does not deprive man of his standing before God on his own feet. Christ does indeed displace sinful man, but in doing so He sets man up with a place of his own in Him. Barth's doctrine of substitution<sup>1</sup> is uncompromising. Christ took

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1. Stellvertretung in the German. The English translators of the Dogmatics make the point that as used by Barth this word includes 'the notions both of representation and substitution, and never the one without the other.' C.D. IV/1, p. vii.



our place without any co-operation on our part and, in the face of our hostility, suffered for us. He not only took our place, but did for us there a perfect and complete work. There remains nothing whatever for us to add to it, yet this exclusive perfection is the ground on which our standing before God and on our own feet rests. Christ does away with our disqualified being and gives us a place in Himself. The fact that His work needs no addition on our part relieves us of anxiety and gives us the confidence boldly to enter into the place He has for us.

In order to open up this place for guilty man, God had to act decisively in His creation. Only if He were God could He do that which was not relative and ineffectual; only if He were man could He alter and convert man. The incarnation of God is thus the presupposition of the conversion of man.<sup>1</sup> It is the incarnation of God Himself, God in person. Only thus could a creation falling into the abyss be rescued. And it is God as servant, for only thus could God take responsibility for man. This involves the Church in the astounding confession that God (in the Son) became a servant.

That God actually became man and a servant is something which can be said only because God has in fact done it. Barth says again and again that the Church must not tell God what He can or cannot do, but must let itself be told by Him who He is and what He does.<sup>2</sup>

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1. In this way the conversion of man in Jesus Christ is 'the revolution of God', as opposed to all 'immanent judgments and crises and catastrophes and revolutions with their relative and limited killing and making alive...' ibid., p. 562.
  2. e.g. ibid., p. 192; cf. also: 'what can all our statements be but a serious pointing away to the One who will Himself tell those who have ears to hear who He is?' ibid., p. 210.



If the Church allows itself to be told who God is, it sees God in Jesus bearing the sin of the world on the cross. It sees God entering into man's plight,

making His own not only the guilt of man but also his rejection and condemnation, giving Himself to bear the divinely righteous consequences of human sin, not merely affirming the divine sentence on man, but allowing it to be fulfilled on Himself.

(C.D. IV/1, p. 175)

Do we really dare to say that it was God who suffered in this way? Barth answers that to take offence at this point is to miss the glory of God and to question our salvation. He first considers this mystery of God from the point of view of the outer movement of God, the mystery of the Son's 'deity in His work ad extra.'<sup>1</sup> If there is thought of diminishing the deity of God in Jesus 'what sense can there be in talking about the reconciliation of the world with God in Him?'<sup>2</sup> He then considers this mystery in relation to the inner mystery of God. Any thought that by going to the cross God abandoned His deity or compromised His identity with Himself (this possibility would set God in opposition to Himself and make Him contradict Himself<sup>3</sup>) would not only limit the glory of God, but would render Him unable to be our Saviour:

Of what value would His deity be to us if - instead of crossing in that deity the very real gulf between Himself and us - He left that deity behind Him in His coming to us....In the folly of such a contradiction to Himself He could obviously only confirm and strengthen us in [our] antithesis to Him....

(C.D. IV/1, pp. 185-6)

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1. ibid., p. 177.

2. ibid., p. 183.

3. Barth points out that the more seriously we take the cry on the cross, the more serious does the temptation to think in this fashion become (ibid., p. 185). Yet to do so would be to become guilty of 'supreme blasphemy'.

In contrast to such appalling possibilities Barth begins 'with the insight that God is "not a God of confusion but of peace" (I Cor. 14: 33).'<sup>1</sup> Far from being divided in Himself, God ('in whom is no...interplay of light and darkness (Jas. 1: 17)') is the Lord in such a way that 'He embraces the opposites of these concepts ['He is absolute, infinite, exalted, active, impassible, transcendent'] even while He is superior to them.'<sup>2</sup> He is the Creator who has created the world distinct from Himself, in relation to which He can act in the form of a servant without losing His form as God.

This answer of Barth's to the supposed possibility of a self-abandonment of God's deity in the incarnation and on the cross is of great importance in view of the recent thesis of T.J.J. Altizer<sup>3</sup> and others that God could be the God of man only if He emptied Himself of deity, emptying that deity into man. In Altizer, as in Barth, the cross of the incarnate One was the conversion of the human condition, but, in contrast to Barth, Altizer says that this is the case because God ceased to transcend man. Altizer bases his idea on the fear that, if God remains transcendent, He threatens man's being as man.<sup>4</sup> Altizer must be resisted because, if God

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1. ibid., p. 186.

2. ibid., p. 187.

3. T.J.J. Altizer, The Gospel of Christian Atheism (Collins, London, 1967), see esp. pp. 62-9.

4. Altizer's fear is parallel to that of D. Sölle who thinks that, because according to Barth and other orthodox theologians, Christ took our place as our substitute, man is deprived of a place and standing of his own: Christ the Representative, trans. D. Lewis (S.C.M., London, 1967), esp. pp. 88-91.

abandons His transcendent deity, He is unable to act decisively for man, and man remains the prey of his sin. Further, since man has sinned against the transcendent God, how can there be forgiveness for him if God no longer acts and lives as transcendent God? Altizer's thesis deprives man of the very ground on which he can stand as man. What we see in Christ is that God is free to be God as the Servant, and thus free to reach man in his need and to rescue him. It is as God affirms His deity that He helps man and gives him the forgiveness that he needs to live as man.

Barth now turns to enquire whether we may properly speak of obedience in God Himself. A positive answer to this question means that the obedience of Jesus and the salvation obtained in that obedience is as sure and necessary as God's own being. A negative answer would be possible (and has been given) in two ways: either by saying that in Jesus Christ we have to do with God only in a secondary and subordinate sense (subordinationism)<sup>1</sup> or by saying that in Him we have to do only with a mode of God's being and not God Himself (modalism).<sup>2</sup> Barth engages this negative answer in 'a frontal assault'.<sup>3</sup> He argues that there are 'three pre-suppositions which, at all costs, we must...affirm.'<sup>4</sup> We must be clear, first, that God is the acting Subject of the

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1. C.D. IV/1, pp. 195-6.

2. ibid., pp. 196-7.

3. ibid., p. 197.

4. ibid., p. 197.



reconciliation of the world with Himself; second, that the atonement is an event 'in the world which not only touches the world from without but also affects it from within to convert it to God';<sup>1</sup> and, third, connecting these two points, that God was the true Subject in the atonement in such a way that 'His presence and action as the Reconciler of the world coincide with and are indeed identical with the existence of...the obedient Jesus of Nazareth.'<sup>2</sup> God humbled Himself to the cross of Jesus in order to convert sinners to Himself, and therefore we dare to affirm that there is obedience 'in the being and life of God Himself.'<sup>3</sup> Indeed, God's divine unity consists in the fact that in Himself He is both One who is obeyed and Another who obeys.<sup>4</sup> God stands in reciprocal relationship with Himself: 'primarily, originally and properly...it is not man...which is the counterpart of God....God is all this in Himself.'<sup>5</sup> If we free ourselves from all arbitrary ideas that God is the prisoner of His own being, monolithic and solitary, and that it is unworthy of Him to become His own servant - if we give up these notions and look to the cross of Christ, 'we cannot avoid the astounding conclusion of a divine obedience.'<sup>6</sup> The doctrine

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1. ibid., p. 198.

2. ibid., p. 199.

3. ibid., p. 201.

4. ibid., p. 201.

5. ibid., p. 201.

6. ibid., p. 202.



of the Trinity meets us here. In equal Godhead the one God

is the One and also the Other,...One who rules and commands in Majesty and One who obeys in humility.... He is the one and the other without any cleft or differentiation but in perfect unity and equality because in the same perfect unity and equality He is also a Third, the One who affirms the one and equal Godhead through and by and in the two modes of being, the One who makes possible and maintains His fellowship with Himself as the one and the other.

(C.D. IV/1, pp. 202-3)

In virtue of this third mode of being, God is equally God in His other two modes of being, and He is this without any contradiction of Himself and therefore also 'without any striving to identify the two modes of being, or possibility of the one being absorbed by the other.'<sup>1</sup> God thus exists in genuine relationship, history and (what is particularly significant for this study) fellowship with Himself. Because He is this triune God, His activity ad extra consists 'in the fact that He gives to the world created by Him, to man, a part in the history in which He is God.'<sup>2</sup> His being does not exclude man, but takes man up into His fellowship in the Spirit. He 'takes into unity with His divine being a quite different, a creaturely and indeed a sinful being.'<sup>3</sup> In doing so He affirms His own inner being. It is 'the strangely logical final continuation of...the history in which He is God.'<sup>4</sup> His inner life takes 'outward form'<sup>5</sup> and does so by taking man into Himself.

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1. ibid., p. 203.

2. ibid., p. 203.

3. ibid., p. 203.

4. ibid., p. 203.

5. ibid., p. 204.

Certain observations need to be made at this point in order to underline the value of this doctrine of Christ's incarnation as it relates to man's conversion.

1. Barth's doctrine of God's self-humiliation indicates that the supreme confidence which God has in Himself as God coincides with and is indeed identical with His humility. His humility and His service are divine equally with His Majesty and His commanding. Thus, He does not withdraw in fear from the humble service of risking Himself and giving Himself to the task of bearing the divine rejection on man's sin. In this way, God's being as God is the very foundation of the salvation of man.

2. Barth's doctrine of God's self-humiliation has its central point in the cross of Jesus Christ. The true and living God reached down to the depths of the human condition. Barth's doctrine does not by-pass actual man in his misery, but shows God coming down into man's terrible condition and uniting Himself with it.

3. This second point demands a statement in terms of God's being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As this God, He both maintained Himself as God and reached the depths of man's misery. In the unity of the Spirit, His inner life took outward form and did so in union with the man Jesus. Later in this study (esp. Chapter VII) it will be asked why Barth did not press this doctrine further, since it is the basis of God's freedom to enter sinful men, and in the Spirit, to share with them the inner riches of His life. It is the basis of a doctrine of the Spirit as the Spirit of the conversion of sinful man as this was accomplished by God in the man Jesus.

Jurgen Moltmann's recent book, The Crucified God, connects the doctrine of the Trinity with the man Jesus and argues that the Spirit of God proceeds from the event of the cross as the Spirit of the justification of sinners. This is a suitable place for assessing the value of his discussion for this study.

Moltmann's book would seem to offer a development of the understanding of conversion along the lines indicated by this study. It is argued in this study that Barth's work needs to be extended in a more thoroughly trinitarian direction, towards a more concrete doctrine of the cross and towards a more complete pneumatology. Moltmann is strongly aware of these three needs. He believes that the doctrine of the Trinity is to be known only from the event of the cross.<sup>1</sup> In God the Son, the trinitarian God took into Himself man's forsaken history. God the Spirit proceeds from the event of the Son's abandonment by the Father, and therefore He is the Spirit 'which creates love for forsaken men,...which brings the dead alive.'<sup>2</sup>

Moltmann's doctrine would thus seem to offer a more concrete involvement of God with man than we find in Barth. In particular, Moltmann shows more clearly that the Spirit

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1. J. Moltmann, The Crucified God, trans. R.A. Wilson and J. Bowden (S.C.M., London, 1974), pp. 235-49.

2. ibid., p. 245. Cf. also: 'What proceeds from this event between Father and Son is the Spirit who justifies the godless, fills the forsaken with love and even brings the dead alive, since even the fact that they are dead cannot exclude them from the event of the cross;...' (ibid., p. 244); 'Because this death took place in the history between Father and Son on the cross on Golgotha, there proceeds from it the spirit of life, love and election to salvation.' (ibid., p. 246).

proceeds from the event in which God takes sinful man to Himself, and thus that the Spirit comes to forsaken men in their actual forsakenness.

Moltmann, however, has not clearly grasped Barth's doctrine that in the event of the cross God did not abandon Himself or enter into contradiction with Himself. He strongly protests against the absurdities of death of God theologies when they say that God died when Christ died,<sup>1</sup> but he does allow such statements as 'in the surrender of the Son the Father also surrenders Himself, though not in the same way.'<sup>2</sup> Moltmann does insist that the Father did not suffer what the Son suffered.<sup>3</sup> The Father suffered grief at the death of His Son, and to that extent He remained the Father in His self-surrender.<sup>4</sup> But if Moltmann is to stand by this profound doctrine of the grief of the Father as Father at the loss of His Son, it is just this language of the Father surrendering Himself which must at all costs be eschewed. There seems to be an ambivalence in Moltmann as to whether God affirmed Himself as God in the cross, or whether He abandoned Himself. Insofar as this ambivalence leads to any weakening of the doctrine of God's affirming Himself in the death of the Son, it leads to a loss of God's power to save man, to be the God

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1. ibid., p. 207.

2. ibid., p. 243. Also: 'In the forsakenness of the Son the Father also forsakes Himself.'

3. 'The suffering and dying of the Son, forsaken by the Father, is a different kind of suffering from the suffering of the Father in the death of the Son.' (ibid., p. 243).

4. Cf. also the excellent statement about 'the consummation of the Fatherhood of the Father' in the eschaton (ibid., p. 266).



of man. But insofar as Moltmann avoids this ambivalence he gives an excellent account of God's being God in the suffering of Christ on the cross. It is an account of God as the Father and the Son embracing in Himself the contradiction to Himself of man's sin. In this way he gives a more concrete account than Barth of the reality of God in Jesus' cry of dereliction.

Moltmann criticises Barth for retaining the distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity.<sup>1</sup> Such a distinction, he believes, hinders theology from affirming the full involvement of God in the event of the cross, since it implies a sense in which what God is in Himself He is not in His dealings with men ad extra. Yet, as was shown above, Barth holds that God in His obedience and in His taking up man's sin 'strangely continues' the being which He is in Himself. God Himself entered the depths. As He did so, He was the God He eternally was, both in His union in Himself and also in His freedom to be One and Another. Because God is in Himself this unity and this One and Another, He did not abandon or contradict Himself when He went to the depths, ad extra. On the contrary, He 'strangely continued' His eternal being. Moltmann is unable to affirm this as unambiguously as Barth. Because he refuses the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity, he cannot say as clearly as Barth that the being of God as One and Another is maintained and continued on the cross. Moltmann therefore comes close to seeing, if not a contradiction in God on the cross,<sup>2</sup> at least

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1. ibid., p. 240.

2. Moltmann will allow no thought of contradiction in God, ibid., p. 244.

a 'bifurcation'.<sup>1</sup> For if the priority of the immanent Trinity is denied, if it is not the immanent Trinity who expresses Himself in the cross, what ground do we have for saying that God's unity was not rent by the cry of dereliction? What ground do we have for holding that God's unity is stronger than all contradiction and able to overcome it? Moltmann wishes to exclude all sense of 'deep division', 'contradiction' and paradox from God,<sup>2</sup> but he could have succeeded more effectively by showing that God in the event of the cross was fulfilling His eternal deity, the deity which He is antecedently in Himself.

Despite these reservations with Moltmann, his central thesis does point the way to a doctrine of the very real involvement of the trinitarian God in man's godforsakenness.<sup>3</sup> What is particularly valuable in his work for this study is his witness to the Spirit. The Spirit moves out to abandoned men as the Spirit of the God who took their abandonment into Himself and overcame it. Moltmann's language is concrete and actualist, and he insists that theology speak of God and His involvement with man only as He is known at the cross.

Anyone who speaks of God in Christian terms must tell of the history of Jesus as a history between the Son and the Father. In that case, 'God' is not another nature or a heavenly person or a moral authority, but in fact an 'event'. However, it is not the event of co-humanity, but the event of Golgotha, the event of

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1. ibid., p. 246.

2. ibid., p. 244.

3. See the fine account of forsakenness as found in sinful man, ibid., pp. 241-4.

the love of the Son and the grief of the Father from which the Spirit who opens up the future and creates life in fact derives. (The Crucified God, p. 247)

Yet theology must have one final and serious reservation with Moltmann. It has already been noted that his refusal to think of the immanent Trinity as prior to the economic Trinity<sup>1</sup> compromises his witness to the power of the love of God to include in itself and so to overcome man's 'forsakenness', and the passage just quoted suffers from this weakness. This refusal also deprives Moltmann of a basis for showing the distinction in unity between the sufferings of Jesus and those of other men. If theology does not see the basis on which God is both One and Another in Himself, the basis on which He is both One who is obeyed and One who obeys, i.e., the unity of the immanent Trinity in the Spirit, what basis does it have for showing the Spirit to be the Spirit who joins other men with Jesus without destroying their difference? Moltmann in fact elides the suffering of Jesus and that of other men. The suffering of God in Jesus becomes identical with the suffering of men in concentration camps.<sup>2</sup> Moltmann obscures the completeness of the act of God in the cross of Jesus, and therefore endangers the liberation of sinful men

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1. Moltmann draws on K. Rahner here: K. Rahner, The Trinity, trans. J. Donceel (Burns & Oates, London, 1970), pp. 21-4.
  2. e.g., the astonishing statement: 'God in Auschwitz and Auschwitz in the crucified God - that is the basis for a real hope which both embraces and overcomes the world, and the ground for a love which is stronger than death and can sustain death.' (ibid., p. 278). For Barth, as for orthodox protestantism, 'the ground for love which is stronger than death' is Christ alone. 'The martyrs' (ibid., p. 278) never share that status. Moltmann is eliding the suffering of God in Jesus with His suffering in the martyrs.

in Him. He also deprives suffering men of their suffering as men: he makes their suffering into something which it is not, i.e., the suffering of God. The bond of love in the Spirit between Jesus and other men is made into an identity of being; or, more correctly, Moltmann has no way of preventing this identity from taking place in his theology. Thus, the love of Jesus for other men is robbed of its compassion and grief, and other men are deprived of their glory as those who are the objects of His love. Further, man's redemption is endangered. Jesus' sufferings were unique and strictly incomparable with those of other men because in them God overcame the sin of the world. In His sinless sufferings God made intercession for sinners. If His sufferings are elided with the sufferings of sinners, He cannot make intercession for sinners, and so sinners are deprived of the love of God which, in the Spirit, moves out to them to meet them in their sin and forsakenness and to transform them.

#### The Act of the Intercessor

God's way of obedience into the far country of man's ruin had a purpose: to intervene in person in order to avert man's rushing headlong into the abyss. How did He do this? By accepting unreserved solidarity<sup>1</sup> with us sinners: 'He willed to bear this need [of man's] as His own,... He took it upon Himself, and He cries with man in this need.'<sup>2</sup> He

1. C.D. IV/1, p. 215.

2. ibid., p. 215.



entered into our situation as our Brother, tempted and assailed as we are. He came into closer engagement with man's pride, cowardice, deceit and rebellion than any other man.<sup>1</sup> Why did He enter our situation? In order to change it from within and therefore effectively to convert it to God.

In other words, Jesus Christ came to be the Saviour of the world. This means that He came to be the Judge of the world!<sup>2</sup> This virtual identification of the titles Saviour and Judge becomes clear and necessary when we note the frequent meaning of the word Judge in the Bible.

The so-called "Judges" of the Old Testament in the early period of the occupation of Canaan are described as men awakened by God and their main office is to be helpers and saviours in the recurrent sufferings of the people at the hand of neighbouring tribes. It was only in addition to this activity in "foreign affairs" that they engaged in judging in the narrower sense of the term. Similarly in the New Testament - a fact which was later forgotten - the coming of the Judge means basically the coming of the Redeemer and Saviour. (C.D. IV/1, p. 217)

This broader meaning of the term Judge includes in it the more obvious sense of pardoning and sentencing.<sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ is the ultimate Judge,<sup>4</sup> perfectly just in His judgment, against whose decision there can be no appeal.<sup>5</sup> His appearance catches all men in the act of setting themselves up as judges. No man can stand before Him: each man is judged

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1. ibid., p. 216.

2. ibid., p. 217.

3. ibid., p. 217.

4. ibid., p. 219.

5. ibid., p. 219.

worthy of condemnation.<sup>1</sup> As God, He holds each man to the consequence of his pride as eternal damnation.

Yet if God appeared among us to make this radical judgment, He did so only in order that He might fulfil that sentence on Himself in all its unmitigated strictness, and so pass on us an utterly merciful judgment. The Judge came in order to be our gracious saviour.

As so often in Barth, the reader is confronted with a truth which seems too good to be true. In the popular mind, as in much 'evangelical' preaching, it is said that God condemns by His justice.<sup>2</sup> Yet the psalms connect God's righteousness with His mercy, e.g. 'gracious is the Lord and righteous, our God is merciful.' (Ps. 116: 5).<sup>3</sup> Paul argues in Romans that it is by His righteousness that God justifies the ungodly.<sup>4</sup> Although this knowledge was one of the fundamental insights of Luther and the reformation generally, protestant Churches have fallen back to thinking of God's righteousness as that which is to be dreaded. God's mercy has come to be seen as a weakening of His justice rather than as a fulfillment of it. Evangelism has been robbed of its greatest strength. Barth is well aware that his doctrine sounds extraordinary, but he insists that the Church correct its teaching and speak of God's judgment only as it is seen

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1. ibid., p. 220.

2. Cf., Craig's Catechism: 'By [God's] mercy the chosen are delivered, and the rest punished by His justice.'  
T.F. Torrance, The School of Faith, (James Clarke, London, 1959), p. 102.

3. 'Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.' (Ps. 25: 8).

4. Rom. 3: 26.

in its execution in Jesus Christ. Admittedly, everything is against the possibility that God should exercise His judgment in this way, but in Jesus Christ the incredible thing has happened: God has demonstrated His righteousness and His judgment as sheer mercy.<sup>1</sup>

To some readers Barth's virtual identification of salvation with judgment sounds legalistic and impersonal. This problem has already been touched on in Chapter IV, and it needs only to be said at this point that in Jesus Christ God has exercised His judgment in a 'personal' and unlegalistic manner. The reservations which the reader may have with Barth's treatment of salvation in terms of justice refer to the possibility of pursuing his thesis further, particularly in the direction of a consideration of Christ's saving work in terms of His priestly office. If Barth had made Christ's priestly work more central, he would have extended and enriched his thesis that all that Christ is and does He is and does for us. He could have given greater personal significance to his doctrine that Christ was judged in our place, since it would have been perfectly clear that Christ gave Himself - offered His own life-blood - for the salvation of His brethren. Barth has recognised these possibilities (though perhaps not as fully as he could have done) in a long footnote at the end of the subsection on the 'Judge Judged in our place.'<sup>2</sup> He shows that a study of Christ's work as Priest confirms the conclusions he has reached in his study of Christ as Judge. It was, therefore, a deliberate

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 222.

2. ibid., pp. 273-83.



decision on Barth's part to develop the doctrine of Christ the Servant under the title of Judge rather than that of Priest. His decision may be defended on the two grounds that, first, the office of Judge is more fundamental than that of Priest, since it has to do with man's right to live and, second, the meaning of Christ as Judge in protestant theology needs to be clearly understood in terms of His being for us, and so rescued from all notions that He acts in it in a 'legalistic' manner. Yet even when this is said it remains a loss that Barth did not incorporate an interpretation of Christ the Priest more fully into his doctrine of atonement. A potential in his theology remains unfulfilled, a potential which relates to Christ's giving Himself vicariously for sinners.

To return to the account of Barth's treatment of Christ the Judge. God is free even as Judge. How He carries out His judgment is His affair.<sup>1</sup> How, then, has He fulfilled His judgment?

What took place is that the Son of God fulfilled the righteous judgment on us men by Himself taking our place as men and in our place undergoing the judgment under which we had passed. (C.D. IV/1, p. 222)

The Judge was judged in our place, for us. This 'for us' does not indicate merely 'with us', but 'in our place'.<sup>2</sup> The Judge has done on our behalf and without our co-operation

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1. Cf. H. Küng, Justification, p.39. Barth underlines the fact that God's judgment is His personal affair. God would not be God if His reaction to wrong-doing could be compared to a mechanism which functions, as it were, independently of His free ruling and dispensing. (C.D. IV/1, p. 221)

2. ibid., p. 229.



what we cannot do. This radical exclusion of all human co-operation exists only for the sake of the radical 'for us'.

Barth fills out the content of the 'for us' in four stages.

(1) Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He took our place as Judge.<sup>1</sup> According to Genesis 3, the root of man's sin is his desire to be as God, himself the judge of good and evil. He wishes to pronounce himself just and others guilty. He thus sets himself up in what he thinks is an inviolable sanctuary. The coming of Jesus Christ the Judge attacks and destroys this safe stronghold:

as very God and very man [He] has taken the place of every man. He has penetrated to the place where every man is in his inner being supremely by and for himself.  
(C.D. IV/1, p. 232)

At this inner centre of our lives where we are for ourselves, Jesus Christ took up His residence, in order to judge not in His favour but in ours.

Barth observes that this means not only man's abasement but also his liberation from the intolerable burden of claiming to be judge.<sup>2</sup> More important, this liberation depends on man's having no part in its accomplishment: it depends entirely on Christ's reversal of the human pride of exalting himself as judge. It is He who converts man, He who undoes Adam's pride.

What does Barth mean by saying that Christ took our place? Clearly, he cannot mean that He took our place

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1. ibid., p. 231.

2. ibid., pp. 233f.

physically, since Christ displaced no one by His coming. As the doctrine of the Virgin Birth indicates, He did not even take the life of an already existing embryo or person. Nor is the expression 'to take our place' meant only metaphorically, since, if this were the case, we would have also to say that His suffering in our place is also metaphorical. Similarly, Barth intends no nominalistic 'as if'. God sees things as they really are, not as He wills to see them. If God sees Christ as being in our place He really and actually is in our place. How can this be? The answer would seem to lie along these lines. We sinners have forfeited our right to represent ourselves. God cannot call upon us to answer ourselves, since, as has been shown, we are liars who pervert the truth of our being. In Genesis 3 God came to talk with Adam, but he was not there where he belonged. His 'replies' to God were evasive, shifting the responsibility for his being and action onto others. He acquitted himself and accused others. It is thus only with Christ, the sinless One who does not lie, that man can answer for himself and take responsibility for the being he is. It is only in Christ that man is 'there' for God. Thus, it is only in Christ that sinful man is there for God since only Christ acknowledges man's sin. In this sense, Christ has taken our place.

If this accurately summarises Barth's meaning, he has succeeded in avoiding any artificiality in the doctrine of Christ's substitution in our place.<sup>2</sup> Christ is the One who

1. Cf. D. Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, trans. J.C. Fletcher (S.C.M., London, 1959), pp. 82ff.

2. In other words, Barth gives a realistic account of what the older theology called the imputation of our sin to Christ.

could and did represent sinful man, without any action on the part of sinful man. Jesus Christ did not actually become identical with the sinners He represented, as the absurd doctrine of 'commutation of persons' maintained.<sup>1</sup> Nor was He merely apparently in our place, 'as if' He were there. Barth does not say that God saw and treated Christ as though He were a sinner, when He knew that He was not. If this were the case, God would be involved in an immoral fiction, and the sinner could have no assurance that Christ has really entered his place; or, more accurately, the sinner's assurance would be as secure as it is supposed that God is willing to regard Christ and men not as they in fact are, but as He wills to see them. Against all this, Barth demonstrates the 'legitimacy' of Christ's representing us, and therefore the actuality of His taking our place in the presence of God. God sees things as they really are, and He sees that Christ the Judge is the one place where man's being can be converted from false to true judgment.

(2) 'Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He took the place of us sinners.'<sup>2</sup> How can He come to this place where we usurp the place of judge? He comes to our 'illegitimate' place because 'as Judge He takes the place which belongs to Him.'<sup>3</sup>

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1. See P. Toon, Puritans and Calvinism (Reiner Publications, Pennsylvania, 1973), pp. 97-9.

2. C.D. IV/1, p. 235.

3. ibid., p. 236.

The great and inconceivable thing is that He acts as Judge in our place by taking on Himself, by accepting responsibility for that which we do in this place. (C.D. IV/1, p. 236)

He makes our evil case His own.<sup>1</sup> He judges our sin in such a way that He condemns it as He takes it upon Himself.

He as One can represent all and make Himself responsible for the sin of all because He is very man, in our midst, one of us, but as one of us He is also very God and therefore He exercises and reveals amongst us the almighty righteousness of God. He can conduct the case of God against us in such a way that He takes from us our own evil case, taking our place and compromising and burdening Himself with it.  
(C.D. IV/1, p. 236)

As He does this, it ceases to be our sin. Our right to represent our case is taken from us because it is now His. He has accomplished the great exchange in which our sins, with the accusation against them and the judgment and curse which necessarily fall on us, fall instead on Him. It was not an exchange merely in appearance, but in bitter earnest. God Himself, in His eternal purity, willed to make our evil case His own.<sup>2</sup> Echoing Luther, Barth says that Christ is quite alone in this: 'He is quite alone as disputatious man, the transgressor, the enemy against God.'<sup>3</sup> Therefore 'our sin is no longer our own but His. In this way He has judged both our sin and ourselves as those who commit it.'<sup>4</sup>

In view of this radical judgment of God, Barth makes three observations about its scope. First, in that Jesus

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1. ibid., p. 236.

2. ibid., p. 237.

3. ibid., p. 238. See also Luther, Commentary on Galatians, trans. J. Pelikan, Luther's Works Vol. 26 (Concordia, Saint Louis, 1963), pp. 276-91.

4. ibid., p. 238.



Christ has taken our place, He reveals to us what our place is;<sup>1</sup> second, it is He and not we ourselves who answer for our sins: he has taken our sins out of our hands once and for all;<sup>2</sup> and, finally, our being as evil doers is over and done with for ever, but, be it noted, it is not merely our sins, but we ourselves as the doers of these sins, who are passed over and destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

(3) 'Jesus Christ was and is for us in that He suffered and was crucified and died.'<sup>4</sup> By this Barth means that God Himself was active in the passion of Christ, suffering what was needed in order to make a complete end of sin. God Himself intervened in person<sup>5</sup> to wrestle<sup>6</sup> with sin and to defeat it. In this action He suffered: His action was identical with His passion.<sup>7</sup> His being for us sinners was His suffering for us.

It could be said that Christ 'suffered what we ought to have suffered',

But [this] is true only as it derives from the decisive thing that in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ it has come to pass that in His own person He has made an end of us sinners and therefore of sin itself by going to death as the One who took our place as sinners. In His person He has delivered up us sinners and sin itself to destruction. He has removed us sinners and sin, negated us, cancelled us out; ourselves, our sin, and the accusation, condemnation and perdition which had overtaken us.

(C.D. IV/1, p. 253)

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1. ibid., pp. 240f.
  2. ibid., pp. 241f.
  3. ibid., pp. 242f.
  4. ibid., p. 244.
  5. ibid., p. 251.
  6. ibid., p. 247.
  7. ibid., pp. 244ff.

It was not punishment as such which Jesus Christ suffered, but punishment in the sense that He suffered what was needed to satisfy for the removal of the obstacle to God's love, i.e., the sinner.

For the sake of this best, the worst had to happen.<sup>1</sup>

A number of points call for comment here.

1. Barth holds that it was the sinner who was destroyed. In Pauline language, the old man, Adam, has been crucified. God is not merely against sin: He sets His face against the doer of it. Sin has its origin in the sinner and cannot be separated from him without artificiality and nominalism. This is an important point, since there is a tendency in many theories of the atonement to think of sin rather much as a 'substance' and hence to introduce somewhat mechanical, perhaps even magical, notions regarding its removal. It is notoriously difficult to speak accurately in this area, and often inadequate language is used where something like Barth's meaning is intended. However, Barth has purified and made more precise our concept of the removal of sin. At least in this part of the Dogmatics it is quite clear what is involved is not a payment of so much suffering for so much sin, nor an incomprehensible transference of sin, as if it were a substance, from the sinner to Christ. As indicated above, Christ took the sinner's place and there judged Himself in his place, thus suffering for him. Without artificiality, He took responsibility for the sinner. In His death as the God-man He destroyed the being of the sinner for whom He legitimately assumed responsibility.

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1. ibid., p. 254.

As noted above, Barth does not hold that Christ and the sinner change places. Apart from the impossibility of it, this would be immoral, since the innocent One would be punished and the guilty let go.<sup>1</sup> Rather, Christ as the God-man took the place of sinners in such a way that He killed the sinner in His death. This was just. Righteous and proper judgment was passed on the sinner; he was banished from God's sight, crucified, burnt up in God's fiery wrath as completely as a burnt-offering in Jewish ritual. Right and proper judgment was passed on Christ. He was not treated as though He were a sinner, but as the righteous Son

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1. Thomas Erskine expressed this point particularly well: 'What is the meaning of the sufferings of Christ...? ....One answer that would be pretty generally given to this question is, "That he came to save sinners, and that he could accomplish this only by suffering in their stead the punishment due to their sin, because thus only their salvation could be reconciled with divine justice, and thus only could it become a righteous thing with God to remit the punishment of real offenders....".'

This view of the atonement,...has, I know, been held by many living members of [Christ's] body; and yet I believe that, with some truth in it, it contains much error....I may observe that it would not be considered justice in an earthly judge were he to accept the offered sufferings of an innocent person as a satisfaction for the lawful punishment of a guilty person. And as the work of Christ was wrought to declare and make manifest the righteousness of God...to the minds and consciences of men, it is not credible that that work should contain a manifestation really opposed to their minds and consciences....Christ died for every man, as the head of every man, not by a fiction of law, not in a conventional way, but in reality as the head of the whole mass of the human nature, which, although composed of many members is one thing - one body - in every part of which the head is truly present.'

The Brazen Serpent (David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1879), pp. 40-2.



of God who in the strength of His own righteous judgment carried the sinner and his sins into oblivion. Barth is not saying that Christ was judged to be a sinner, - this would be both fictitious and unjust. Rather, Christ was judged competent and worthy to deal decisively with the sinner and his sin. As this One Christ truly and really 'bore our sins in His own body on the tree.'<sup>1</sup> Barth is not taking offence at the radical language of Paul about Christ being made sin and a curse for us, but rather making it possible for us to see the reality and the justice of such language. In this way, Barth is providing a kind of commentary on Luther's famous exegesis of Galatians 3: 13.

2. In this doctrine of reconciliation, Barth is making use of the ontology of the Dogmatics. Every man is created in Christ and every man has sinned and so forfeited his being, having become a prey to eternal death. In His mercy the Son of God has intervened in person, meeting man's fall into the abyss and so arresting it. As He was handed over to death, so He has handed over to death the death of sinners, thus restoring them to life in Himself. All this happened in Him and not in them, and therefore it is only in Him that the being of the old man is dead. Yet, in Him, the old man is no more.

(4) In one respect these three preceding points give a complete account of Christ in our place. Yet it needs to be added that Christ's suffering in our place only

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1. I Pet. 2: 24.



appears to be negative. It is in fact supremely positive because He has done right in our place. We exalt ourselves, arrogating to ourselves the office of judge, making ourselves like God. We acquit ourselves and judge others. We are disobedient. Refusing to repent of our sins we justify ourselves and thereby repeat the origin of all sin. Jesus Christ reversed this: He humbled Himself, judged Himself and interceded for others. He was obedient. He confessed our sin, making resolute and inflexible repentance for us. He reversed Adam's fall, converting the human situation.

In a long and deeply penetrating footnote, Barth interprets Jesus' passion as His obedient repentance for sinners. Jesus could be tempted as all men are, but His specific temptation was to repent of His calling to make repentance for His brethren. The three temptations of the tempter immediately following His baptism aimed at this. 'The third temptation, according to Luke's account, is the most astonishing of all.'<sup>1</sup> The tempter suggests that He step out in utter faith (as it would seem) so that God would justify Him, vindicating His faith. Yet to obey this subtle temptation would in fact be to require God to justify His (Jesus') actions and thus to put Himself in the right over and against God. He would thereby cease to put God in the right against Himself.

He would have tried triumphantly to maintain His rightness with God instead of persisting in penitence, instead of allowing God to be in the right against Him. In an act of supreme piety, in the work of a mystical enthusiasm, He would have betrayed the cause of God by making it His own cause, by using it to

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 262.

fulfil His own self-justification before God.  
(C.D. IV/1, p. 263)

He would have stepped out of fellowship with the sinners baptised in Jordan, and He would have ceased to make repentance for them.

At the culmination of His obedience Jesus was again tempted to abandon His repentance for sinners. In the desert and throughout His ministry Jesus had constantly resisted the devil, unceasingly repenting of man's sin, but in the Garden of Gethsemane it seemed that the tempter 'returned all the more powerfully to avenge [his] defeat.'<sup>1</sup> Yet the horror of Gethsemane was not this, nor even Jesus' vision of the sin of the world, but God's answer to His prayer. Barth makes three points about the agony in the Garden: 1. Jesus was quite alone: there can be no thought of the disciples or the Church 'assisting' or even watching with Jesus. 2. God did not reply in words to Jesus' prayer. His answer was 'the sign of the prophet Jonah....God will give His answer to the prayer only in this inconceivable, this frightful event...'<sup>2</sup> Barth comments:

Note that [the answer] came in the same language in which Satan now spoke with Him as the prince of this aeon, triumphantly avenging His contradiction and opposition in the wilderness. The will of God was done on earth as the will of Satan was done.....The coincidence of the divine and Satanic will and work and word was the problem, the darkness in which Jesus addressed God in Gethsemane.

(C.D. IV/1, p. 268)

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1. ibid., p. 266.

2. ibid., p. 268.

3. Jesus therefore prayed that the 'good will...of God...should not coincide with the evil will...of the tempter and of the world controlled by him, the hamartōloi.'<sup>1</sup> He clearly wished that it might not be so, yet He did not set His will against God, thus setting up a 'precondition'<sup>2</sup> to obedience. He was 'shaken' by 'the coming concealment of the lordship of God under the lordship of evil and evil men.'<sup>3</sup> yet He did not demand that God order things as He desired:

...He only prays, He does not demand. He does not advance any claims. He does not lay upon God any conditions. He does not reserve His future obedience. He does not abandon His status as a penitent. He does not cease to allow that God is in the right, even against Himself.

(C.D. IV/1, p. 270)

He prayed 'Thy will be done' not in resignation but in praise of the holiness of God's will. It must not be forgotten what 'Jesus was taking on Himself with this: Thy will be done.'

It was a matter of divine judgment being taken out of the hands of Jesus and placed in these supremely unrighteous judges and executed by them upon Him.... It was a matter of the obedience and penitence in which Jesus had persisted coming to fruition in His own rejection and condemnation.

(C.D. IV/1, p. 271)

This prayer was answered as no other prayer has been answered. Jesus received strength to carry through His penitence to the end, 'punishing the sin of the world by bearing it Himself.'<sup>4</sup> He thus defeated Satan and the hamartōloi even as they worked their will on Him. In this

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1. ibid., p. 269.

2. ibid., p. 269.

3. ibid., p. 269.

4. ibid., p. 271.



manner He fulfilled all righteousness just as He had engaged Himself to do when He entered the way of penitence with the hamartōloi in Jordan.

This footnote has been summarised at some length because it gives a particularly rich account of the heart-beat of Barth's doctrine of Christ's suffering in our place. As with Calvin, the centre of Christ's substitutionary work is located in His obedience. Jesus Christ put God in the right over and against Himself, and this obedience consisted in His thorough binding of Himself to sinners. United with them, He suffered in their place. His sufferings may be described as His being punished in our place. Barth is also willing to indicate the harshness of Christ's sufferings, and he believes that Christ was forsaken by the Father. The cry of dereliction is for Barth the key to the interpretation of Christ's work on the cross.<sup>1</sup>

Yet for Barth Christ's obedience to the Father and His sustaining our punishment has the character of repentance. This was by no means excluded by Calvin, and it is impossible to miss the origins of this thought in his constant insistence on Christ both as sinless and as sinner, i.e., on Christ as sinless in Himself and as bearing sins not His own.<sup>2</sup> Calvin had little to say of Christ taking the sin of the world on Himself, and much to say of its being laid on Him. Calvin was thinking of Isaiah 53, and of the great Pauline

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1. Cf., also C.D. IV/3, pp. 388-97.

2. see. e.g., P. van Buren, Christ in Our Place (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1957), pp. 45-7.



texts which say that Christ was made sin and a curse for us. The imagery of John's Gospel, connecting Christ's obedience with His being the lamb of God, also point to His bearing sin as that which was laid upon Him. Barth has shown that theology must also think of Christ's active taking man's sin to Himself, and especially to His 'identification' with sinners at the Jordan. Barth has indicated the intrinsic connection between Christ's sinlessness and His 'identification' with sinners.

It is, however, surprising that Barth did not develop further this very penetrating account of Jesus 'repentance' in our place. Christ's attitude of mind, His repentance is central for Barth. His fulfillment of all righteousness consisted in His penitence, but this perception needs to be pursued further, especially as it bears on the repentance of sinners as they turn to God.

In McLeod Campbell's The Nature of the Atonement, the forgiving righteousness of God is seen as the foundation of the atonement. According to Campbell, God has in Him no vindictive will, such as we would find in a proud man.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, God's righteousness is expressed in free, forgiving love.<sup>2</sup> He saw God's forgiveness to sinners to be

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1. This point is developed from his early sermons Sermons and Lectures, Vol. 1 (R.B. Lusk, Greenock, 1832), pp. 11-3.

2. Campbell is particularly thinking of the awesome nature of God in His forgiveness: 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest feared.' (Ps. 130: 4). 'The first demand which the gospel makes upon us in relation to the atonement is, that we believe that there is forgiveness with God. Forgiveness - that is, love to an enemy surviving his enmity, and which, notwithstanding his enmity, can act towards him for his good; this we must be able to believe to be in God towards us, in order... to believe in the atonement.' Nature of the Atonement (James Clarke, London, 1959), p. 18.

as free and unconditioned as ours should be (but is not) to our neighbours (cf. Eph. 4: 32). Indeed, the very nature of righteousness and holiness is the very opposite of vindictiveness. Holiness is that which sorrows over the sins of men.<sup>1</sup> Righteousness bears insults and desires the restoration of the offender. Thus, what God required from men was a confession of the evil which they commit as evil. But this is just what men as sinners cannot do.<sup>2</sup> This is what Christ does for men. As the perfectly righteous One, He sees sin for the utter evil that it is and acknowledges the righteousness of God's judgment. He justifies God.<sup>3</sup> But He does more than this. Righteousness means to love one's neighbour as oneself. He loves His neighbour as Himself,<sup>4</sup> and confesses his sins as His own. By virtue of His holiness He bore the sin of the world and made expiation for it. Loving His brethren whose flesh He shared and whom He loved as Himself, He prayed vicariously: 'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' (Ps. 32: 5).<sup>5</sup> He thus received the divine forgiveness on behalf of men.

Campbell's superior penetration is apparent in his account of the mind which was in Christ, the obedience in which He made repentance and received forgiveness for sinners.

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1. J.M. Campbell, Nature of the Atonement, p. 140.

2. ibid., pp. 144, 149.

3. ibid., pp. 119-21.

4. ibid., pp. 230-1.

5. ibid., p. 294.

The mind that was in Christ, according to Campbell, was His perfect love to God and His love for His neighbour as Himself.<sup>1</sup> As God in His righteousness sorrowed over the sins of men, so He in His righteousness sorrowed over men. This conception of Christ's sufferings as His holy sorrow over sinners goes beyond Barth. Barth does indeed understand holiness as the freedom of God to come to the sinner's side

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1. J.M. Campbell, Responsibility for the Gift of Eternal Life (MacMillan, London, 1873), pp. 14f.; Nature of the Atonement, pp. 125ff., 230f. G.S. Hendry, The Gospel of the Incarnation (S.C.M., London, 1959), p. 101, observes that 'both McLeod Campbell and Barth have pointed out that Christ's so-called summary of the law in the two commandments of love is the law of his own life, in which it is perfectly manifested.' Campbell and Barth are formally the same here and Barth's account of Christ as fulfilling the two-fold law of love is extremely powerful (C.D. III/2, 'Jesus, Man for Other Men', pp. 203-22, esp. pp. 216f.), but Barth lacks some of Campbell's penetration into the material content of Christ's loving His neighbour as Himself. In development of Barth's own moving perception into Christ's bearing sin as His compassion for His neighbour (pp. 211f.) it can be said that the Son, loving His Father with all His heart, soul, strength and mind, completely embodied His Father's yearning over His sinful people: He sorrowed over them with the holy love which hates sin and so answered to His Father's desire for the purification of sinners. Campbell says: 'Loving the Father with all His heart and mind and soul and strength, the Saviour loved His brethren as Himself. He, the perfect elder brother, unlike the elder brother in the parable, sympathised in all the yearnings of the Father's heart over His prodigal brethren; and the love which in the Father desired to be able to say of each of them, My son was dead and is alive again...; in Him equally desired to be able to say, My brother was dead, and is alive again...' (Nature of Atonement, pp. 125-6). Campbell's insight into the yearning, sorrow and pain of the Father's heart as embodied in the Son as He sought for lost sons fills out the content of Barth's perception, and gives it an even greater personal character. This point corresponds to the argument of K. Kitamori that without insight into the content of the pain of God in the cross, talk of the incarnation becomes 'empty formalism' (Theology of the Pain of God, E.T. (S.C.M., London, 1966), p. 43).



and to overcome his sin, but he does not speak of it as God's sorrow for sin. Some passages from McLeod Campbell will indicate what is involved here.

...what I contemplate is the following out of the conception of the Son of God suffering in suffering flesh that which is the perfect response of the divine holiness and divine love in humanity to the aspect of the divine mind in the Father towards the sins of men. (Nature of the Atonement, p. 140)

Again:

Surely the tears of holy sorrow shed over the sins of others - the tears, for example, of a godly parent over a prodigal son, are not penal, nor, if shed before God in prayer, and acknowledged in the merciful answer of prayer in God's dealing with that prodigal, are they therefore to be conceived of as having been penal. But the fact is, that God grieves over our sins is not so soon received into the heart as that God punishes sin, - and yet, the faith that He so grieves is infinitely more important, as having power to work holiness in us, than the faith that He so punishes, however important....Men more easily believe that Christ's sufferings shew how God can punish sin, than that these sufferings are the divine feelings in relation to sin....  
(Nature of the Atonement, pp. 140-1)

And again:

...He has taken the nature and become the brother of those whose sins He confesses before the Father, and... He feels concerning their sins what, as the holy one of God, and as perfectly loving God and man, He must feel.  
(Nature of the Atonement, p. 146)

An ever richer account of Christ's holiness in the atonement is found in Irving:

"he bare our sins in his own body on the tree;"... in that body of flesh and blood...our sins were borne...and yet he was sinless. How so? His perfect righteousness...made him love men and all mankind as he loved himself. Our sins were thrilling up into his soul, as if they had been all his own; from the ends of the earth, and the two extremes of mankind, the beginning and the ending, the sins of all flesh came up in a dark cloud to cover his soul with distrust and dismay: and the gathering darkness is called in Scripture "the hour and power of darkness." Great was his terror and agony and forsakenness;....



This is the nature of sin-bearing. It is not as if sins were laid upon, and lapped about him like a physical covering. The sting of sin is not outward and physical, but inward in the conscience, in the darkness, distance, and alienation from God, in the waste desolation of soul, and dismal forsakenness of God which it worketh...

This concentration of a world's guilt came upon him because he was holy and righteous; and by virtue of his right manhood he felt every man's transgression as his own; and speaketh as his own of them in the Psalms. And their effect upon him, their number against him, their strength to sever between him and God, was all the same as if they had been his own. And so bearing them in his flesh, gathering them all within his grasp he lifted them from the earth, and strangled them upon the Cross....

....What made him capable of gathering within his heart the sins of all men? His holiness, his perfection of holy manhood....Christ though Son of God was a perfect man, and therefore perfectly one with all other men, notwithstanding the distinctness of their personality; and every man's sin was his in the experience and feeling of it, just because he was himself holy and sinless....God was well pleased with him therefore, because thereby he felt as God intended man to feel, unity of substance with all other men, notwithstanding the distinctness of their personality. ....The most holy man is the greatest sin-confessor; and a perfectly holy man, that is Christ, is the confessor of all sin; as we find him to be in all the Psalms which speak of him.

(Christ's Holiness in Flesh, pp. 60-63)

In view of this picture of the mind which was in Christ, the following points can be made.

1. Christ's righteousness consisted in His loving sinners as Himself.
2. In this righteousness He knew the evil of sin and,
3. also took that sin to Himself and bore it in His person as His own. At this point the doctrine of Christ as Judge must be enriched to include that of Christ as Priest. Though Barth says that the two doctrines coincide, it is difficult to give full scope to Christ's vicarious work without including a discussion of His priestly office. In order to gain access to the structure of the priestly

office, it will be helpful for a moment to refer again to Blake's poem London, discussed in Chapter I in relation to the poet's conception of his (self-chosen) priestly role. In that poem, the poet speaks on behalf of the victimised child who is unable to represent himself. By his act of imaginative self-identification with the child, he spoke and (in a certain sense) suffered in his place. There is posited here a substitutionary role for the poet endowed with imagination, a role which indirectly points to the priestly role of Christ. In both cases, an incapacitated person is represented by another who does something costly for him and which engages with his needy situation. In both cases this work is done through a power which transcends their common humanity but which also indwells it. For Blake, this power is the creative imagination, man's innermost spirit which exists at the central point where man is constituted man, and which therefore enables one man to compassionate with another. It was argued that Blake's view was an audacious and ill-founded assertion of innocence and that only Christ's righteousness is truly able to represent others. Barth says that only He has the competence to represent others because He is also God: 'because He was the Son of God and Himself God, He had the competence and the power'<sup>1</sup> to suffer in our place. As the Son of God through whom all men are created, He held all men in being and could legitimately take their place. This is surely correct but more must be said. First, it is the triune God who acts in the Son of God, the

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 223.

God who is also Spirit and in whom the Creator integrates the inner centre of the life without displacing it, and who therefore enables the Son to compassionate with all other men. Without this reference to the Creator Spirit in the Son of God, without this reference to God's being in act whereby He is both One and Another without competition or lust for absorption, how can the Son identify Himself with others without either absorbing them into Himself or being so separate from them as to substitute them without representing them? Second, it is by His innocence that He represented others without absorbing or replacing them: loving them as Himself He can interpose Himself for them in such a way that He acts for them with the same seriousness and effectiveness as He is Himself. Again, it is in the Spirit that the Son does this. The doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews, much used by Campbell and Irving, that it was by the eternal Spirit that Christ offered Himself in innocence to God on behalf of sinners, answers the view of Blake that it is the creative imagination which endows man with the competence to represent those who cannot represent themselves. This doctrine also delivers the doctrines of imputation and substitution of the impersonal notions of transference which have crept into them. Because Barth does not specify the God who makes the Son competent to suffer in the sinner's place as the Spirit, he has not wholly escaped these notions even in Volume IV of the Dogmatics.

4. It was in the strength of His righteousness that Christ confessed, judged and 'strangled' the sin which He bore in Himself. He made repentance for the sin of the



world, sorrowing over sin and thus expiating it. Christ's sorrow over sin also awakens repentance in sinners with a life-giving sorrow which penal notions tend to stifle. It is a great loss in the Dogmatics that Barth does not develop Christ's obedient repentance as His sorrow.

5. This sorrow of Christ, as His loving His brethren as Himself, included His utterance of the Amen in our humanity to God's condemnation of sin. Further, He made intercession for us sinners. He is therefore the one place where sinners may utter the Amen to God's condemnation of their sin. Since genuine forgiveness implies condemnation of offences, this Amen gives the sinner access to God's pure forgiveness. Again, the doctrine of the Spirit is inescapable, since by the Spirit man participates in the intercessions of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The weakening of this dimension of Barth's Christology leads to the narrowing of the understanding of the self-judgment of sinners as they participate in Christ.

6. For the sake of completeness it should be added at this point that this conception of the righteousness of the

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1. D. Sölle, op.cit., pp. 88-91, complains that Barth's conception of substitution replaces sinners so that they have no place of their own. She completely ignores Barth's argument about our place in Christ, and has no notion of Christ's continuing work as Mediator (cf. J. Moltmann, op.cit., pp. 262-3), but it must be said that the doctrine of Christ's righteousness in the Spirit answers more effectively than can either Barth or Moltmann her fears about Christ in our place. By the Spirit, Christ, who acted totally for and without incapacitated sinners (Sölle, p. 89), brings them actively to share in His continuing intercessions, and so He does not by-pass their willingness to live in Him but in fact makes them willing to do it.



Son of God in His bearing our sins, also indicates how He communicates His righteousness to us without artificiality. Calvin asks:

How are we righteous in the sight of God? It is assuredly in the same respect in which Christ was judged a sinner, that he might be a criminal in our room, and might be dealt with as a sinner, not for his offences but for those of others....It is in the same manner, assuredly, that we are now righteous in him.

(Commentary on II Corinthians, p. 244)

If, then, through His righteousness whereby He loved sinners as Himself, Christ was righteously judged as bearing sins not His own, so we, though sinners, are by the same righteousness righteously judged to be righteous in Him. If we add that Christ was righteous in this way through the Holy Spirit, every suggestion of artificiality will be purged from the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, and it will further be clear that we are neither absorbed into Him nor established separately from Him. We are righteous in Him.

These points regarding Barth's understanding of Christ's repentance have been made in order to draw out a development which Barth's theology needs.

### The Vindication of the Intercessor

If Jesus Christ is the Judge judged in our place, our being as sinners and our sin has been overcome in Him. Our sins are not merely potentially forgiven: in Him, they are forgiven. He does not become our Saviour as we decide for Him: He is Himself our Saviour. But it would have been possible for God to leave the matter there, with ourselves

and our sins dead on the cross.<sup>1</sup> It was only the sheer mercy of God that He performed the new act of vindicating Christ, of raising Him from the dead and so raising us to newness of life.<sup>2</sup> By this act, God vindicated His own righteousness in demanding obedience unto death from Christ and also He vindicated Christ's righteousness in obeying Him even to the death of the cross. The resurrection was the mighty act of justification: 'He was raised for our justification.' (Rom. 4: 25).<sup>3</sup> This means that we have a future, a future as justified men, and that our justification is not in ourselves but in Christ. He, He Himself, is our justification.

Ever since Lessing (with his perception of the 'ugly ditch' of history)<sup>4</sup> it has been difficult to understand how Christ who lived nearly 2000 years ago can be present to us here and now. The problem has normally been solved by saying that Christ by His work established for us the possibility of life and justification and that it remains for us to actualise that possibility by our act of faith.<sup>5</sup> Much has been made of the human act of appropriation. Barth will have none of this: Jesus Christ is risen and He comes across the centuries to us. He is our living Contemporary.

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1. C.D. IV/1, pp. 296-7.

2. ibid., pp. 304-9.

3. ibid., pp. 305-6.

4. ibid., p. 287.

5. see Barth's dissatisfaction with Bultmann in this respect, ibid., p. 285.

Yet it is not merely that Christ seems to be separated from us by space and time. That is merely an intellectual problem and does not touch the profound spiritual problem of how we sinners can exist together with the Holy One. As He approaches us, will we not cry out as Peter did: 'Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man' (Lk. 5: 8)?<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ is again the answer. He has destroyed our sinful being and now comes to us as the One in whom we have new being. He Himself is our transition from our sinful being to our justified being. Barth has much of deep spiritual insight to say in relation to this point, but, for the purpose of this study, it needs only to be underlined that the resurrected Christ is God's Yes to sinners and that in Him men do have 'room' and space of their own to live as justified men.

Now that we have before us Barth's doctrine of election, of Christ's incarnation, cross and resurrection as these indicate God's movement to man, three important points come into view. First, from the beginning to end of this work, righteousness is at work. In election, God elected Himself as He who loves man as Himself; in Christ's incarnation God expressed His right to become man; in His obedience unto death, He exercised His right to be the Judge judged in our place; and in His resurrection, the Father vindicated His righteousness as suffering for our sin and thereby established our righteousness. Thus, in proving His righteousness God justified us sinners. His righteousness and

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1. ibid., p. 290.



His mercy are identical. Second, to say the same thing in another way, this entire work of God's - in its origin, execution and vindication - is His being for us. In election, He affirmed the identity of His being for Himself with His being for us; in His incarnation, Christ became man in order to take his place and to do him good there; in His cross, He was obedient unto death in order to repent of man's sin, to convert him from death to life; and in His resurrection, He was raised as the One in whom man's new being has been established. The work of McLeod Campbell and Irving was used above in order to strengthen this thesis. To say the same thing from a third angle, Christ's work of justification is identical with His person. His being is in His act. He Himself is the living One who is the justification of sinners.

A serious incompleteness in Barth's account of God's movement to man now comes into view. Earlier he was praised for recognising that the triune God was wholly involved in the obedience of the Son, but now it must be said that he has not carried this perception through to its climax: he gives scarcely any recognition to the Spirit of the Father in the Son's self-offering on the cross. He recognises the Spirit's work in the incarnation and the resurrection, thus acknowledging His work in forming the new creation out of the old, but if the Father and the Spirit were not wholly involved in the passion of the Son, how can we speak of the cross as an event in God's own history? How can we speak of the Father, in confirmation of His eternal Fatherhood, bearing the loss whereby He could destroy the old creation

and raise up sons to Himself? How can we speak of the Spirit who, in confirmation of His eternal love of the Father and the Son displayed to the uttermost on the cross, become the Spirit who adopts aliens as the sons of God? Has not Barth thereby to some extent at least mitigated the severity of the love in which the Father yearned over His prodigal creatures, sent His Son into the far country to repent in holy sorrow of their sin and thereby also raised up sons through His Spirit who would run into the Father's open arms with tears of joy?

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONVERSION OF HUMAN NATURE IN THE SON

In the previous chapter it was seen that Barth understands God the Son to be He who humbled Himself to become man, to be God as man. As this man He brought man's sin to a full end. In this chapter Barth's discussion of the conversion of human nature in Jesus Christ will be examined. It is not enough (glorious gift though it is) for man's sin to be destroyed and replaced with righteousness. For man truly to be man he needs to live a new life: he needs conversion. This conversion has taken place first of all in Jesus Christ, and He is the basis and power of the turning to God of other men. It is this doctrine which especially concerns this study, particularly as many theologies locate the central point of man's conversion, not in Christ, but in these other men who are the object of His work.

A point regarding terminology needs to be made. Barth is dissatisfied with the static and impersonal overtones of the terminology of classical Christology, and so he prefers to speak not of Christ's human nature (Natur) but of His human essence (Wesen). Unfortunately, to speak of human essence only adds to the impersonal sound of the idea in English, and so for the sake of clarity Barth's usage has been retained only when specific reference is made to his thought.

This study is concerned with the turning to God of men other than Jesus Christ and the following account of Barth's discussion of Christ's human nature will be oriented toward that question. Three questions in particular will



direct the account. First, does Barth give the humanity of Christ its full amplitude? Second, is there in fact a conversion of human nature in Barth's account of Christ? And, third, is the exaltation of human nature in Christ as Barth conceives it in fact communicable to others? These questions will not be tackled directly until the following section is reached, but they will form a pattern of guidance for the present task.

Barth believes that the traditional understanding of the vere homo of Jesus Christ, though correct, must be deepened. This traditional account includes two elements: (a) Christ had that humanity in common with all other men, i.e., that which makes a man distinct from all other beings,<sup>1</sup> and (b) He also had a particular determination of that creaturehood, flesh.<sup>2</sup> By flesh, Barth means man under divine condemnation, adamic man. This account does not speak of the representative power of the vere homo and leaves Christ's humanity rather much in the air as something which exists for its own sake rather than for others.<sup>3</sup> Barth argues that because we have here the humanity of the Son of God we have also the true man who, precisely in being this true man, is unlike us so that He may be wholly what we are. He finds that Jesus Christ gives Himself to be known as the 'good creature of God and also flesh',<sup>4</sup> and that He is both

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1. C.D. IV/2, p. 25.

2. ibid., p. 25.

3. Barth does not actually say this, but it is clear that he is dissatisfied with the traditional account of the vere homo.

4. C.D. IV/2, p. 27.



completely like and completely unlike us.<sup>1</sup> This is not only because His humanity is something which ours is not, i.e., the humanity of the Son of God, but also because His humanity is exalted humanity.<sup>2</sup> His human essence is not destroyed or altered, it is exalted.<sup>3</sup> This exaltation brings human essence to its true status: it is freely itself and therefore truly itself. Because His human essence is exalted, while still being our human essence, our human essence is exalted to God.<sup>4</sup>

This is the very briefest answer to the question of the vere homo of Jesus Christ. The vere homo has for Barth a vicarious quality. It is our humanity, only it is our humanity differently from ours<sup>5</sup> and in such a way that ours is exalted in it. It is surprising that Barth connects this vicarious power more closely with His union with the Son of God than with His sinlessness, i.e., with the act and righteousness of His human will - though it should be noted that the freedom and spontaneity of Christ's will as man is essential to Barth's argument. Barth says that the exaltation of human essence in Jesus takes place in 'free, spontaneous and inward agreement with the will...of God',<sup>6</sup> and it is therefore clear that it is not in a special kind of 'humanity'

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1. ibid., p. 27.

2. ibid., p. 28.

3. ibid., p. 28.

4. ibid., p. 30.

5. ibid., p. 28: 'Because and as He is the Son of God, He is exactly the same as we are, but quite differently.'

6. ibid., p. 29.

(as though that were possible) but in our humanity that this exaltation takes place. However, for Barth the vicarious power of Christ's humanity depends more on its being the humanity of the Son of God than on its being our humanity, i.e., our humanity in which He does not do as we do.

The exaltation of human essence must be understood in three phases.<sup>1</sup> First, in its 'first and final base in the divine decree of grace.'<sup>2</sup> There is nothing contingent in the exaltation of human essence.<sup>3</sup> More, the exaltation of man in Jesus Christ in no 'by product' of divine willing, or one purpose among others: it is the divine will. The exaltation of man and his sanctification is the will of God for which He has determined Himself from eternity, and for which He humbled and gave Himself in the history of Jesus Christ. Therefore, man's sanctification has this absolutely firm and unshakeable foundation. Second, this divine will was realised in time, in the flesh of Jesus Christ. And, finally, the realisation of this will in flesh was revealed in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. In other words, the exaltation of man originated in the divine counsel and was the whole of that counsel; it was actualised in the flesh of Christ and is now revealed and imparted to men through Him.

The actualisation of the eternal will to exalt man particularly concerns this study because it is the 'place' in which human nature was converted to God. It is necessary

1. ibid., p. 31.

2. ibid., p. 31.

3. ibid., p. 31.

to gain a clear picture of what Barth has in mind here.

### The 'Vere Homo' of Jesus Christ

God did not cease to be God when He became man. His becoming a creature was the 'act of divine majesty',<sup>1</sup> but it was the majesty of divine humility.<sup>2</sup> This is why it was neither the Father nor the Spirit who became man.<sup>3</sup> Not that the Father and the Spirit are not also humble, but 'humility is not alien to...the true God, but supremely proper to Him in His mode of being as the Son.'<sup>4</sup> Thus, man does not cease to be man, but for the first time becomes true man, himself, in his assumption by the Son of God. Barth notes briefly that the incarnation is the work of the whole Trinity.<sup>5</sup> The Son did not descend to the depths without the Father who sent Him and who loved Him, nor did He do so without the Holy Spirit, who, as the love of God both inwards and outwards, is 'the divine principle of creation, reconciliation and redemption'.<sup>6</sup> This life of the Son in the Trinity is His suitability to descend to the depths of man's fallenness. Barth stresses His suitability as the Son of the Father - especially His obedience:

It is in Him that God can be not merely the One who sends but the One who is sent, the One who practises that basic and total mercy; that, because His free mercy wills that He should, He can break through the

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1. ibid., p. 37, cf. p. 39. Cf. C.D., I/2, pp. 172-202.

2. ibid., p. 42.

3. ibid., p. 43.

4. ibid., p. 42.

5. ibid., p. 44.

6. ibid., p. 43.

bounds of the divine being and descend into the depths, into the far country, the world, and there become and be a completely different being - man; that as man He can open up the frontier, not to make man a second God, but as man, by Himself becoming and being man, to set him within this frontier, to bring him to His own home, to place him in and with Himself at the side of the Father. (Jn. 1: 1-2). (C.D. IV/2, p. 44).

Sadly, this profound doctrine is not developed throughout Barth's ensuing discussion of the vere homo, and there will later be cause to observe that his brief mention of the Holy Spirit jeopardises the intention of his doctrine as indicated here.

Barth unfolds the humility of the majesty of the Son in four stages, each showing that the vere homo is grounded in the act of His divine majesty.

First, the Son of God became and is also man.<sup>1</sup> The Son expressed the humility of God, and therefore the fact that the Subject in this becoming is the Son involves no alteration of human essence. The divine sonship of Jesus grounds His humanity. The enhypostasis and anhypostasis of post-Chalcedon Christology affirm the complete humanity of the Son of God.<sup>2</sup> Because God's majesty is not self-exalting but self-humbling and includes obedience within itself, His act of majesty in becoming man gives Jesus from His very origin the grace of true and obedient humanity. These classical terms also witness to the fact that the incarnation could not have arisen from human potentiality: 'The divine act of humility fulfilled in the Son is the only

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1. ibid., p. 45.

2. ibid., pp.49-50.



ground of this happening and being.'<sup>1</sup> Further, the divine Subject has as His object flesh. He became not a son of man but the Son of man.<sup>2</sup> The object of His self-abasement was not simply one man but the humanum of all men.

Second, the Son of God became a man: 'this One exists, not only like the Father and the Holy Ghost as God, but in the fulfillment of that act of humility also as man, one man, this man.'<sup>3</sup> Thus 'God Himself acts and suffers when this man acts and suffers as a man.'<sup>4</sup> And therefore

the human...acting...of this one man directly concerns us all, and His history is our history of salvation which changes the whole human situation, just because God Himself is its human subject in His Son...

(C.D. IV/2, p. 51)

Further precision is needed. Third, 'in this one Jesus Christ divine and human essence were and are united'.<sup>5</sup> There is a genuine participation of the divine in the human and of the human in the divine which, since it is based on the majestic act of the Son of God as Subject, takes place in its proper order: the condescension of the divine to the human is the basis of the exaltation of the human to the divine. There is, therefore, neither confusion<sup>6</sup> nor separation<sup>7</sup> of essences in this union of twofold participation.

From this there follows a fourth statement, the goal of the preceding three: the Son of God exalted human essence

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1. ibid., p. 46.

2. ibid., p. 48.

3. ibid., p. 50.

4. ibid., p. 51.

5. ibid., p. 60.

6. ibid., p. 63.

7. ibid., p. 64.

into Himself.<sup>1</sup> Human essence (let it be said again) is not destroyed or altered, but there is rather a mutual participation in which 'the divine acquires a determination to the human and the human acquires a determination from the divine.'<sup>2</sup> This mutual participation is not at all impersonal or a mingling of 'natures': it is wholly personal. The Son of God, He Himself, 'is the active Subject and takes the initiative.'<sup>3</sup> Because the union is personal in this sense, grounded in the act of the Son of God, a twofold differentiation of this participation must be made. First, there is no interchange of divine and human essence:<sup>4</sup> the divine gives and the human receives;<sup>5</sup> and, second, human essence does not become divine, but is elevated into fellowship with it.

In later parts of this study the work of the human nature of Christ as filled with the Spirit will be emphasised, in order further to strengthen the point that man remains man and does not become something other in the incarnation. This emphasis carries with it the danger that it may minimise the fact that it was the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, who is the Subject in Jesus Christ. In order to avoid this danger, and therewith the loss of salvation itself, Barth's twofold differentiation will be borne in mind. However, if this danger is noted, a danger in Barth's own

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1. ibid., p. 69.

2. ibid., p. 70.

3. ibid., p. 70.

4. ibid., p. 71.

5. ibid., p. 70.

position needs to be noted. Where it is said that the Son of God is the Subject in Jesus, and the doctrines of enhypostasia and anhypostasia are employed, there is a tendency toward Eutychianism unless the presence of the Holy Spirit is taken into account. As is clear from the above summary, and from the twofold differentiation just noted, Eutychianism is abhorrent to Barth, yet it still remains true that Barth has made no mention of the Spirit in the receiving and obeying of the human nature,<sup>1</sup> and that he leaves himself open to the danger of suggesting that Christ's human nature was true human nature without the Holy Spirit, and therefore in a way not possible for the human nature of other men.

Barth proceeds to a more precise explanation of what is meant by this union. First, in Jesus Christ 'the divine essence imparts itself to the human, the human essence receives the impartation of the divine...'.<sup>2</sup> There is no reserve of the one from the other. Second, we must go further and speak of the address made to the human essence of Jesus Christ, and so of the 'fulness of the concretion in which the union of the two natures take place...'.<sup>3</sup> This means that His human essence does not 'possess' grace: it is a matter of active obedience to the divine address of grace.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Barth leaves undeveloped the pregnant statement which he makes at the beginning of his account of the divine act of majesty in the incarnation: 'He [the Son] became and is [also man] according to the will of God the Father, in the humility of His own freely rendered obedience as the Son, in the act of majesty of the Holy Spirit.' p. 45.
  2. ibid., p. 74.
  3. ibid., p. 84.
  4. ibid., p. 88.



He is completely determined by the electing grace of God. The grace of the hypostatic union thus means that human essence is not altered<sup>1</sup> but exalted 'to harmony with the divine will'.<sup>2</sup> His sinlessness is not self-evident. Barth speaks of the grace of sinlessness.<sup>3</sup> Sinlessness is not a denial of free humanity, but its recovery. Sin is a perversion of human nature - a 'possession' to sin as opposed to the grace of sinlessness. The grace of this exaltation '...is the exaltation of human freedom to its truth, i.e., the obedience in whose existence it is not superhuman but true human freedom.'<sup>4</sup> This freedom to be man in the grace of God is not a habitus, a 'transferred condition',<sup>5</sup> ;but rather the actualisation of One who shares fully in the good-pleasure of the Father and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> His humanity participates, not by habit, but by act, in the grace of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ not only participates fully in this grace, but, as it is addressed to His human essence, He is also qualified to be the organ of the action of the Son of God as Mediator.<sup>7</sup>

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1. ibid., p. 91.

2. ibid., p. 92.

3. ibid., p. 92. C. O'Grady, The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth (Chapman, London, 1968), pp. 148-9 emphasises the active nature of Christ's sinlessness.

4. 'the determination of His human essence by the grace of God does not consist in the fact that there is added to Him the remarkable quality that He could not sin as a man, but in His effective determination from His origin for this act in which, participant in our sinful essence, He did not will to sin and did not sin.' C.D. IV/2, p. 92.

5. ibid., p. 94.

6. ibid., pp. 94, 95.

7. ibid., p. 96.



As this man, Jesus Christ receives power for the reconciliation of the world. It is the power of grace, just as His authority is not for His own aggrandisement but is authority in 'execution' of the divine will,<sup>1</sup> it is power for and on behalf of other men. In mediating this power and authority, His human essence is not superfluous but, since it is fully recipient of divine grace and obedient to it, it is the indispensable organ of His power for man.<sup>2</sup> Barth stresses that this exaltation must not be understood as an appropriated state, but as event and history.<sup>3</sup> If it is not so understood there is the danger of a divinisation, or, at least, a dehumanisation, of human essence. This is the highest possible dignity for man. Since Jesus is the recipient of divine grace in this history, we can say that in Him

our human essence is given glory and exalted to a dignity and clothed with a majesty which the Son who assumed it...has in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost.... (C.D. IV/2, p. 100)

Barth now completes his account of the exaltation of human essence in the incarnation. He speaks of the common actualisation of divine and human essence in Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> He notes that in the preceding discussion we 'have represented the existence of Jesus Christ as His being in His act',<sup>5</sup> and that there is little to add to what has already

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1. ibid., p. 97.

2. ibid., p. 99.

3. ibid., p. 99.

4. ibid., p. 104.

5. ibid., p. 105.

been said. Barth's consistent concentration on Christ's being in His act means that he guarantees the reality of God as God and the reality of man as man, as this happens in the grace of the hypostatic union. But it is at this point that one would expect Barth to speak of the grace of the hypostatic union as the grace of the Holy Spirit. Without this reference to the Holy Spirit it remains unclear as to how the human essence of Jesus Christ was maintained in its being as human essence. It is, of course, true to say that it was maintained as such by grace, but it was maintained as human essence in the act of obedience by the indwelling of the Spirit. This reference to the Spirit is necessary and not superfluous because the Spirit is that mode of the being of God, that act of God, in which He indwells what is other than Himself without displacing it but by bringing it into obedience and union with Himself. A reference to the grace of God does not go as far as this because it does not specify this mode of God's being in His act and therefore it does not show how man's being as man is actualised.

Barth first speaks of the common actualisation. The inner life of God does not need any actualisation,<sup>1</sup> but the divine essence of the Son 'needed a special actualisation in the identity of the Son of God with the Son of Man.'<sup>2</sup> Also, human essence as such does not await actualisation in the Son of God, 'but it needs a special actualisation in identity

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1. ibid., p. 113.

2. ibid., p. 113.

with this One, Jesus Christ, and therefore in its union with human essence.'<sup>1</sup> Barth then speaks of the common actualisation. 'It is not just a divine novum, nor just a human, which appears....At one and the same time it is the great divine and the great human novum.'<sup>2</sup> The great new thing appears, the fellowship of God and man in Him, actualised in Him. It is this which is the ground of Barth's major thesis on sanctification and conversion: man's new life is actual in Him. The divine and the human are joined in Him, but they 'are always as different as God and man are different.'<sup>3</sup> But in this difference they are commonly actualised: 'It is where the divine rules and reveals and gives that the human serves and attests and mediates.'<sup>4</sup>

The Ground of the Communication of the Exaltation of Human Essence which is in Christ

In the preceding section of this chapter the historical realisation of God's eternal gracious election of the man Jesus was studied. We now turn to the revelation of this humanity in His resurrection. The act of divine majesty in the incarnation of the Word 'has a subjective character as well'<sup>5</sup> as the objective character we have noted. It is genuine revelation. We do not look inward to ourselves, but only to Jesus Christ, who alone may reveal who He is. Our knowing Him is based only in Himself. When He

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1. ibid., p. 113.

2. ibid., p. 115.

3. ibid., p. 116.

4. ibid., p. 116.

5. ibid., p. 120.

is known, 'a twofold opening up takes place - the opening up of the fact [the incarnation] and the opening up of the human subject to receive it.'<sup>1</sup> This takes place in the 'event of the speaking of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>2</sup> This witness to the human spirit thus depends on no capacity within man, but solely on the fact of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is no 'second force'<sup>3</sup> alongside Christ; rather His renewing, liberating and enlightening power<sup>4</sup> is that of the effective presence of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus Christ Himself witnesses to Himself in man's subjectivity through the Holy Spirit.

'The Holy Spirit is...the divine act of majesty in its character as revelation.'<sup>5</sup> He leads to Christ, takes us captive, and brings us to know Christ and ourselves in Him. He comes as light, i.e., revelation. What He does also has the character of light, for where He is there is genuine liberty. It is the liberty of the sons of God in the Son whom He reveals to us. The Holy Spirit thus brings about the self-witness of Jesus Christ in individual lives.

Christ's witness to Himself has its objective basis in His resurrection and ascension. His being is secret, but He reveals Himself in His resurrection. He reveals Himself as the One He is, the One whose work was fulfilled in the crucifixion. Because He was hidden in the crucifixion, He is hidden even in His revelation in the resurrection. The

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1. ibid., p. 126.

2. ibid., p. 126.

3. ibid., p. 128.

4. ibid., p. 126.

5. ibid., p. 128.



resurrection, therefore, is the objective basis for the inner, subjective revelation by the Holy Spirit of the work completed on the cross: it is the event of Jesus' self-declaration.<sup>1</sup>

This must be said because it may seem that Christ's self-attestation is 'void',<sup>2</sup> vacuous, lacking concretion in actual history. But in His resurrection He witnesses to Himself as the crucified One, as the One who fulfilled a concrete history there. Barth therefore turns to 'the New Testament attestation' of Him. We will not discuss Barth's treatment of the historical Jesus other than to note that the same lack of reference to the Holy Spirit, which was noted earlier, becomes a problem, especially in relation to his understanding of the miracles. A certain distance between Jesus' humanity and ours emerges because Barth attributes the 'royalty' of Jesus more to His union with the Son of God than to His faith in the Father and His filling with the Holy Spirit.

In the section, 'The Direction of the Son', Barth speaks of 'the power of the existence of Jesus Christ for those among whom and for whom, as the Reconciler He, the Son of God, became also the Son of man...'.<sup>3</sup> How does He reach and affect us with His power? Barth assumes at once that this power does actually reach us<sup>4</sup> - not because we

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1. *ibid.*, p. 142.

2. *ibid.*, p. 249.

3. *ibid.*, pp. 264-5.

4. *ibid.*, p. 265.

actually see the evidence of it (as we do), but because the way from Him to us 'is wide open.'<sup>1</sup> The discussion of His work with us can, therefore, be only a matter of the 'development and explication' of the meaning of the being and action of the Son of man.<sup>2</sup>

At this point, two errors need to be avoided. First, that of 'throwing doubt...upon the power and lordship of the Son of Man, which as such reach and affect all men.'<sup>3</sup> Whether we recognise it or not, He lives as our Brother. There can be no questioning 'the perfection of the decision which has taken place concerning us in Him.'<sup>4</sup> Any decision we make concerning Him can only be a reflection of the decision taken concerning us in Him. The second error is to underestimate the radicalness 'of the change...which the perfect decision taken in the Son of Man means for our existence.'<sup>5</sup> The Son of man has set us in a unique freedom 'which has to be ...lived out in its uniqueness.'<sup>6</sup> This freedom becomes ours in the freedom of Jesus the royal man. The only question with which we 'must occupy ourselves whether and in what circumstances this can...take place.'<sup>7</sup>

Basically, this is a question of knowledge, of judging ourselves according to the judgment of the Lord which He has

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1. ibid., p. 265.

2. ibid., p. 265.

3. ibid., p. 267.

4. ibid., p. 267.

5. ibid., p. 267.

6. ibid., p. 267.

7. ibid., p. 268.

made concerning us. This testing can take place only in Jesus Christ. It is a matter of knowing ourselves as those who have been accepted in the decision concerning us in Him. Barth has I Cor. 11: 31-2 in mind here, where Paul argues that if we judge ourselves truly we shall not be judged of the Lord. We are to reckon what we are in Jesus Christ. (This theology of ourselves in Christ is rooted in I Corinthians, especially 1: 30, where it is said that Christ is made sanctification.) We must look away from ourselves and see ourselves only as found in Him. This is true self-knowledge.

But this being of ourselves in Jesus Christ is concealed. This is not primarily because of our sloth (however true that may be), but because of Christ Himself, and above all because of His cross. The dominating characteristic of His royal existence and its radical power in us is the cross. Because of His death, He has power from beyond death. 'He was alive from the dead....He comforted and claimed His people from the place where there can be no question of the possession and exercise of human help and authority.'<sup>1</sup> He alone was powerful in death, but His power is on behalf of all others. It is His power over all others to represent them - to judge them in their old being and to direct them to a new existence. Thus, Jesus Christ in the concealment of His cross is 'the turning point of the human situation.'<sup>2</sup> The very conceal-

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1. ibid., p. 295.

2. ibid., p. 296.



ment of our being in Him serves, therefore, the radical reversal of our human direction.

To this point Barth has not spoken directly of our response to Christ. He wishes to make it perfectly plain that our obedience can be a matter only of living out the conversion of man accomplished in Him. But the New Testament counts on the fact of our human decision, and Barth now turns to consider it.

There can be no question as to the being of Jesus Christ, and therefore our being in Him. There can be no question as to the love with which God has loved us from all eternity and once for all in time. This does not need our assistance or completion or co-operation or even repetition....What is needed, and therefore the point at issue, is its attestation in a corresponding way of thought, direction of will... and determination of our existence which come to us in relation to it, and which we have to fulfil in relation to it, so that in response to the love with which God has loved us we love Him in return.  
(C.D. IV/2, p. 296)

Our response to Christ depends on letting ourselves be told of Jesus and of ourselves in Him.<sup>1</sup> As the New Testament imparts its witness to Jesus, He lays claim to us. This exposes our old existence to attack, killing in order to make alive. The New Testament 'counts on a very definite power',<sup>2</sup> which is not compulsion but freedom, i.e., the freedom to receive as our own the conversion of God to man as it has taken place in Jesus Christ :

the freedom to keep to the fact, and orientate ourselves by it, that the alteration of the human situation which has taken place in Him is our own;

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1. ibid., p. 303.

2. ibid., p. 304.



the freedom, therefore, to set ourselves in the alteration accomplished in Him.

(C.D. IV/2, pp. 304-5.)

Barth speaks with great care of this freedom, which he thinks of as a freedom 'to appropriate', 'keep' and 'set' ourselves in the conversion already achieved for us in Christ. In no sense at all do we repeat or complete the turning of man to God in Christ. Rather, we turn to God through the grace of Jesus Christ. His power is no distant power, but power from within, which gives us freedom to decide positively in relation to what we are told in the New Testament witness.<sup>1</sup> This is our conversion, our correspondence to the conversion in Christ. As He makes Himself known in this way, He completes His witness of Himself to us.

In reflecting on the nature of this power we must guard our thinking against any suggestion of magic, mechanical force or demonism. It is the wholly personal power of Jesus Christ, and comes entirely from Him. It does not therefore mingle with man's supposed power, nor does it blind him or rob him of his will and capacity for deliberation. Barth connects it with Christ's resurrection:

The power of the transition on which the New Testament counts when it looks from the base and origin of its witness to its goal in the existence of Christians is absolutely unique as the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (C.D. IV/2, p. 310)

It is therefore utterly separate from any 'worldly' power which might seek to dominate and overpower man. It is the power in which a man freely, because uncompelled, makes a leap into a new dimension, the dimension of life beyond death,

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1. ibid., p. 305.

and does so not in his own strength but entirely in the strength of Him who overcame death.

Another way of speaking of this power is to say that here the Holy Spirit is present, for the Spirit is none other than the presence of Jesus Christ in His resurrection.

Barth does not proceed to a doctrinal discussion of the Holy Spirit, but attempts a precise elucidation of the nature of the power and the holiness of this power of transition from Jesus Christ to us Christians. This power 'aims at an enlightened, liberated and understanding life which is peace in all its dimensions.'<sup>1</sup> It is a 'power distinguished from all other forces', and this is especially true because it alone 'gives man an immutable foundation',<sup>2</sup> and therefore a peace which is eternal life. What is this power? Barth answers: 'the power whose operation is presupposed in the New Testament is the outgoing and receiving and presence and action of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>3</sup>

Yet if the Church is to count on the Holy Spirit alone, having no 'tangible' assets of her own, is she not 'defenceless', abandoned with nothing of her own to fall back on? How is she to know that the Spirit is a Spirit to be trusted with the absoluteness which the above answer requires? Barth answers: the Spirit is holy in that He is separate and separating, because He is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 'the self-expression of the man Jesus.'<sup>4</sup> In this sense the Spirit is separate from all other spirits and wholly to be trusted.

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1. ibid., p. 316.

2. ibid., p. 318.

3. ibid., p. 319.

4. ibid., p. 331.

He is the Holy Spirit because He is the imparting of the royal man Jesus in His resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

This answer is complete and needs no addition,<sup>2</sup> but it admits of a certain elucidation.<sup>3</sup> According to the New Testament, the Spirit is not only the Spirit of Jesus Christ, but also the Spirit of God, the Lord.<sup>4</sup> Barth observes that the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost did not in fact come on 'all flesh', but came on only a few.<sup>5</sup> This small number was indeed the reason for the continuing existence of the world, 'all flesh'. God was at work 'in His own most proper cause - the cause in which it is a matter of the purpose and meaning of all creation and the attainment of His will with it.'<sup>6</sup> There are three decisive factors in this history: first, the man Jesus, 'who supplies the initiative and makes the whole possible and actual'; second, the goal of this history, the 'existence of the community'; and, third, 'the power of the transition', His disclosure to them and their disclosure to Him.<sup>7</sup> In this whole history God is at work, God in a threefold sense, but it is only in relation to the power of transition that there is a material coincidence with one of the persons of the Trinity, i.e., the Holy Spirit who is not only the divine power mediating between Christ and Christendom, but the mode of being of the

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1. ibid., pp. 322-3.

2. ibid., p. 331.

3. ibid., p. 332.

4. ibid., pp. 322-3.

5. ibid., p. 334.

6. ibid., p. 335.

7. ibid., pp. 336-7.



one God which unites the Father and the Son.<sup>1</sup> This knowledge throws us back again onto the Spirit, and so makes it seem that we are giving an unpragmatic answer to a very pragmatic problem. Barth asks (with the practical concern of a man calling for God):

Why is it that He is always so invisible and so inconceivable....And yet...why is it that He and His work,...that mutual disclosure, in which the man Jesus and other men find each other and are united, are always so real...more real, in fact, than the more obvious and visible and conceivable connections of earthly and conceivable history?

(C.D. IV/2, pp. 340-1.)

The answer comes in what is nothing less than worship, for it is a discovery of the newness of God Himself. In His being as the mediator between Jesus and other men, in this mystery of His being and work in our earthly history, 'there is repeated and expressed and represented what God is in Himself.'<sup>2</sup> The act of union of God Himself, of the Father and the Son, 'falls straight down from above into the sphere of our essence and being and life, repeating and representing and expressing itself in the unknown and yet known event of that transition [between Jesus and us].'<sup>3</sup> It is therefore no magical alien work that the Spirit does in this transition (as if He were dressing up in a role, assuming a 'persona'). On the contrary, in it God 'lives His own most proper life'.

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1. ibid., p. 339.

2. ibid., p. 341.

3. ibid., p. 341.



The Father lives with the Son, and the Son with the Father, in the Holy Spirit who is Himself God, the Spirit of the Father and the Son....It is as this living God that He is with us in this event. This is what makes the event so powerful, so distinctive, so different in its nature and power from all other events.  
(C.D. IV/2, p. 342)

Such is Barth's 'spiritual' answer to this highly practical problem. Such are the 'pragmatics of God'!

To conclude: In the Spirit, the distance but also the transition between God and us are the 'representation, reflection and correspondence' of the distinction but also the union in which God 'is the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit as His own eternal living act.'<sup>1</sup> For us men this means that the astoundingly good thing is true that the transition from Jesus to us is as true and as sure as the being of God Himself! This doctrine has been summarised at some length in order that a significant development of it may be made in the following chapter.

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1. ibid., p. 346.

## CHAPTER VII

### ASSESSMENT OF BARTH'S ACCOUNT OF THE EXALTATION OF MAN IN CHRIST.

It has been noted that according to Barth the Son of God is the Subject in the incarnate Christ, but that this means no overshadowing of the complete humanity of the Son of man. Barth can maintain this because he grounds his doctrine of the two essences of Christ clearly on the self-humbling of the Son of God. The exaltation of man in Christ depends entirely on the humiliation of God in Him. Because the Son of God exercises the majesty of His divinity in this servitude, when He took human essence into union with Himself, He did not render the human essence merely a passive vehicle of His divine power, but made it the active residence of the self-impartation of God to man.

This doctrine of the self-humiliation of the Son of God answers certain difficulties which have been felt with the doctrine that the Word is the Subject in Christ, and with the corresponding doctrines of enhypostasis and anhypostasis. Many have said that if the Son of God is the Subject in the hypostatic union the human nature of Christ can no longer be human nature in the sense that other men have it.<sup>1</sup> Does not human nature always and everywhere exist only in the self-

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1. 'The protest against enhypostasia must be maintained. Jesus Christ had his own individual human hypostasis and human mode of existence. The man that I am, Jesus was also. Of him alone is it really true that nothing human remained alien to him.' D. Bonhoeffer, Christology, trans. J. Bowden (Collins Fontana Library, London, 1971), p. 107.

activation of a subject and human energy? But it should be noted at the outset that Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus, men for whom the doctrines of enhypostasis and anhypostasis were of the substance of the faith, insisted on two wills and two energeia in the incarnate Son. Maximus insisted that Christ's human will was not what he called thelema gnōmikov, i.e., a will directed by desire toward the world, but he did so only that he might stress the perfection of Christ's will and therefore the full humanity of His human will.<sup>1</sup> Only thus could He save other men. For Maximus and John the doctrine of the hypostatic union meant that the human willing was in no sense independent of the Word, that it had no existence apart from Him, but that this union with the Word involved no weakening of the full humanity of His human nature. Barth has pushed this doctrine further. He has done this because he has penetrated further into the self-humbling of God, and has thus made it plain that God's self-address to man is that which makes man freely to be himself.

To understand this advance it is worth examining some aspects of the history of the doctrine of the human nature of Christ. As is well known, the early Church resisted any attempt to diminish the humanity of the Saviour. It attacked docetism and gnosticism. The Council of Constantinople (381)

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1. K. Rozemond, La Christologie de Saint Jean Damascene (Buch-Kunsterverlag, Ettal, 1959), p. 34. Cf. also P. Sherwood, St. Maximus the Confessor (Longmans, Green and Co., Westminster, 1955), pp. 58-63; and H. U. von Balthasar, Liturgie Cosmique, trans. L. Lhaumet and H.-A. Prentout (Aubier, Paris, 1947), p. 201.

affirmed that Jesus Christ is perfectly (teleōs) man, against the Apollinarians who held that the Logos replaces the nous (as the seat of sin) of Jesus. Similarly, the Council of Chalcedon (451) affirmed, against Eutychians and Monophysites, two distinct natures in the one Person, Jesus Christ. These two natures, while united indivisibly and inseparably are unconfused and inconvertible, and therefore the Council upheld the full, unrestricted humanity of Christ. When the Monothelites argued that the one hypostasis in Christ meant only one will, the Council of Constantinople (680) expanded the dogma of Chalcedon to affirm that Jesus Christ possessed a human as well as a divine will.

The work of three Fathers calls for attention. First, Leontius of Byzantium, who believed that it would be a return to Nestorian heresy to hold that Christ's human nature could exist apart from the Word. He therefore developed the doctrine that Christ's humanity had no independent hypostasis and that it existed only together with the Word. He meant by this no disrespect to Christ's human nature. He argued that '"not being without hypostasis" is not the same as "being a hypostasis"',<sup>1</sup> and that there can be an 'enhypostatic nature', i.e., a nature which does not exist in itself but in another. Such was the human nature of Christ. It retains in its enhypostatic existence its 'proper principle of existence' and is therefore 'not devoid of the quality of self-determination, as if it were wholly dominated by the Person of the Logos.'<sup>2</sup> Maximus the Confessor developed

1. R.V. Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon (S.P.C.K., London, 1953), p. 318.

2. ibid., p. 319.



this understanding, giving particular prominence to the struggle and victory of the human will of Christ. He opposed monothelitism, urging that Chalcedon 'safeguarded the autonomy of manhood and granted an independent status and positive value to the order of creation.'<sup>1</sup> Central to Maximus' strenuous Christianity was the resistance of Christ to every temptation, His victorious granting forgiveness to His enemies, and, in obedience to Him, the Christian's warfare against all temptation.<sup>2</sup> He ascribed autexousion<sup>3</sup> to Christ's human nature and attached great importance to the effort and struggle of His human will. So real was this struggle and victory that Maximum could say that other men are called to be imitators of Christ and he makes much of the correspondence between Christ's battle against the demons and ours.<sup>4</sup> J.A. Dorner says:

Instead of upholding a Christology which required the human to be merely a passive organ and point of transition for the almighty will of the Logos, the efforts of Maximus were directed toward an ethical Christology. (Person of Christ, p. 191)

Dorner also argued that what he termed the 'Oriental' tendency of the Council of Constantinople stressed the unity of the two natures in such a way that Maximus' insight was crowded out:

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1. This is the opinion of H. Chadwick, The Early Church (Pelican, London, 1967), p. 211.
  2. P. Sherwood, op.cit., pp. 108-11. Maximum is particularly insightful concerning the victory of love won by the Lord against death and the devil, but he does not relate this victory to the Holy Spirit and he does sometimes write so as to suggest that it was in the power of His divine nature that His human nature triumphed.
  3. J.A. Dorner, The Person of Christ, Div. II, Vol. I, trans. D.W. Simon (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1861), pp. 195-6, 231.
  4. P. Sherwood, op.cit., p. 111.

The two physical wills were not opposed to each other, but the human will followed, that is, never took the initiative....It was, further, not hostile or rebellious, but subject to the divine and almighty will. All decisive volitions proceeded, thus, from the inmost centre of Christ, from the divine nature which formed His personality. Originally, indeed, there were two wills conceived of as capacities, and two natures;...but the divine will, by its omnipotence, carried the human will along with it in its course at every volition. (Person of Christ, p. 204)

At this point Dorner himself is surely confused. He is correct to regard with horror the idea that 'the divine nature, by its omnipotence, carried the human will along with it', but he misconstrues the way in which the human nature activated itself. If the human will had ever taken the initiative it would be sinful human nature; if it were not subject to the divine will it would cease to be obedient human nature and therefore it would be no longer sinless, true human nature. The fundamental difficulty here is that Dorner conceives of the omnipotence of God in a way which does not allow for His self-humiliation. If Dorner allowed the Son's omnipotence to be His obedience and servanthood, he would no longer be afraid to allow divinity its omnipotence and initiative.

John of Damascus is the third figure who deserves mention, not because he carried further the doctrines of either the divine or the human nature of Christ, but because his understanding of the enhypostasis is helpful. His Christology is closely related to his soteriology.<sup>1</sup> He allows the human will and energy its full and unrestricted area, but, because he has grasped so firmly that it is the

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1. K. Rozemond, op.cit., pp. 4-16.

Son of God who acts in the human acting of Jesus Christ, Pelagianism is kept effectively at bay without threatening the role of the human subject in faith. There is in John no suggestion of the human operating in an almost self-sufficient sphere, as there is, for example, in Theodore of Mopsueatia.<sup>1</sup> Though John did not advance the doctrine of God, he did speak clearly of the condescension of the divinity of Christ. It is the divine which comes to the human and not the human which reaches into the divine. The Word, without change and without mingling with human nature, united it with Himself. Because of this condescension (it is hardly self-humbling in Barth's sense, though John at this point resembles Barth) there is a perichōrēsis,<sup>2</sup> a movement of the divine to the human and therefore a participation of the human in the divine. This mutual penetration is rooted solely in the divine:

The mutual indwelling did not come from the flesh, but from the divinity, because it is inconceivable that the flesh should indwell the divinity - rather, once the divine nature indwelt the flesh, it gave the flesh the same ineffable indwelling, which, indeed, we call union. (Orthodox Faith, IV, 18, p. 379)

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1. Cf. R.A. Norris, Manhood and Christ (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1963), pp. 173-89, and also p. 209: 'Theodore's thought requires not only that 'the Man' be a subject of attribution, independent of the Word; it requires also that he have a function, as a centre of voluntary activity, in the work of redemption.' Theodore regarded man's salvation to consist primarily of his rational, free obedience to divine law. Therefore his Christology can be envisaged 'as an effort to understand the kind of Redeemer it was who can bring about this kind of redemption.' (p. 189). Hence his dualism in Christology and his insistence on the independence of the human nature of Christ.
  2. K. Rozemond, op.cit., pp. 129-33: perichōrēsis is here understood in the sense of interpenetration.



Further, John spoke of the role of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Christ,<sup>1</sup> thus making it clear that the enhypostasis was an initiative on the divine side which indwelt and activated the human nature. Yet his summary of the Orthodox faith gives a finally unsatisfying account of Christ's humanity. He comes close to regarding Christ's human nature as intrinsically sinless, if he does not in fact do so, and his exaltation of Mary's virginity and sanctity distances Christ's humanity from ours.<sup>2</sup> This lack of an unambiguous doctrine of the taking up and sanctifying of fallen humanity in Christ means a serious limitation of his doctrine of salvation and, indeed, the doctrine of Christ's victory over sin seems to recede behind the fact of the hypostatic union.

No really important advances in the understanding of Christ's human nature were made until the Enlightenment. Anselm, Bernard and the Victorines did give an amplitude to the picture of the humanity of the Saviour which was new in theology,<sup>3</sup> and they penetrated deeply into the mystery of His obedient suffering, but they did not refine the doctrine of the hypostatic union. Again, although the Reformers recovered and expanded the place of Christ's human nature in the two-way movement from God to man and from man to God in Christ, they did not substantially advance the doctrine of

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1. John of Damascus, The Orthodox Faith, trans. S.D.F. Salmond (Catholic University of America, Grand Rapids, 1958), Book III, Chap. 2, p. 270.
  2. S. Jean Damascene, Homelies Sur La Nativité, trans. P. Voulet (Sources Chretiennes, Paris, 1961), paras 2, 3, pp. 49-53.
  3. R.W. Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages (Hutchinson, London, 1953), Chap. 5.



Christ's victory in human flesh. It took the Enlightenment, with its perception into the historical and developmental character of man's activity, together with the Romantic movement, with its perception into the self-constitutive quality of the act of the human subject, to pose for theology the problem of what actually took place in the human subject and life-history of Jesus. To answer the question of the Enlightenment regarding development and history, the old distinction between Christ's person and His work had to be dissolved into the dynamic picture of Christ's work as His life-act.<sup>1</sup> His achievement had to be understood as the fulfillment of the person He is, and His continuing work as the declaration and impartation of His perfect self-offering in the cross. Calvin's presentation of Christ pointed in this direction, but his understanding of the perfection of Christ in His three offices needed expansion. Calvin's account of Christ's offices concentrates chiefly on the way in which they express His mediatorial role, **but** he says almost nothing about Christ's development of these offices through the phases of baptism, crucifixion, ascension and return. The understanding of Christ's development within His mediatorial work, and His revelation of His perfection within it, could come only with the answer to the question of the Romantic movement regarding the human subject of Christ. Only when it was seen that Christ took up fallen human nature, won a terrible battle in it against temptation and sin, finally presenting that humanity perfect to God as the culmination

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1. It is one of the great achievements of Barth in the Dogmatics to have done this.

of a life of perfect trust in God, could it be seen that the human subject of Christ developed and grew in His mediatorial office. McLeod Campbell displayed great understanding of the human subject in Christ in his account of Christ dealing with the Father on behalf of men, and of His final self-offering as the culmination of His life of trust.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the preceding century the understanding of the humanity of Christ had been growing. J.K. Dippel (1673-1734) argued that Christ inherited fallen human nature, experienced and overcame all temptations and was therefore sinless.<sup>2</sup> It was in the nineteenth century that the doctrine of Christ's victorious struggle to win sinlessness came into its own. In his commentary on Hebrews, Gottfried Menken said that Christ 'took human nature as it was after the Fall in Adam',<sup>3</sup> and a very similar doctrine was preached at about the same time by Edward Irving.<sup>4</sup> Erskine of Linlathen, Kohlbrugge, J.C. von Hoffmann, E. Bohl and Hermann Bezzel are listed by H. Johnson as preaching Christ's victory over sin in fallen human nature.<sup>5</sup>

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1. J.M. Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement (James Clark, London, 1959), p. 300.
  2. H. Johnson, The Humanity of the Saviour (Epworth, London, 1962), pp. 145-8.
  3. Quoted in ibid., p. 150. Cf. C.D. I/2, p. 154.
  4. 'They [Irving's critics] argue for an identity for an identity of origin merely [between Christ and other men]; we argue for an identity of life also. They argue for an inherent holiness; we argue for a holiness maintained by the Person of the Son, through the operation of the Holy Ghost.' E. Irving, Our Lord's Human Nature (Baldwin and Cradock, London, 1830), p. xi.
  5. H. Johnson, op.cit., pp. 155-67. Cf. the list in C.D. I/2, pp. 154-5.

Common to all these theologians was the belief that Christ's true humanity was due neither to a special constitution nor to its union with the Word. They affirmed His divinity and His sinlessness, but they believed that His perfect righteousness was a 'moral election' and not a necessity of His personal constitution.<sup>1</sup> It became possible to give full weight to the thesis of the Epistle to the Hebrews that Christ was perfected through what He suffered and in this way became the author of salvation (Heb. 2: 10; 5: 8). The dynamic movement of the human nature of Christ as He perfected Himself within the priestly and kingly offices could now become an integral part of the doctrine of salvation. This emphasis on the victorious contest of Christ's human nature with sin would have been Pelagian if it had not been based on the realisation that it was through the Holy Spirit that Christ wrought his triumph. This is particularly important because it not only means that Christ achieved perfection in the same strength and by the same means as other men are to be sanctified, but also that a trinitarian dimension is given to the life of the incarnate One. It opened the way not only for a fuller and richer account of the conversion of human nature, but also of the dwelling of God in the men converted by Him.

Barth's doctrine of Christ's human essence in the Dogmatics portrays a human essence fully responsive to divine grace, tempted as we are and yet fully victorious. The Word assumed not only creaturely existence but also

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1. E. Irving, Christ's Holiness in Flesh (John Lindsay, Edinburgh, 1831), p. 66.

fallen humanity, sarx, human existence under the divine condemnation. But Christ did not do as other men do: where they sin He resisted all temptation and maintained His life in the grace of sinlessness. He had an active human will, and His sinlessness was not a habit but a matter of will and act and obedience to grace. Indeed, it is because of the grace of God that the union of Jesus with the Word means no diminution of His humanity but His elevation to be true man, i.e., to be freely what He is and in this sense true man. Precisely because God as God, true God, is gracious to man, the humanity of Jesus is true man.

Barth's understanding of Christ's human nature is a great advance for theology in that he has rooted it firmly in the grace of God. Where in the nineteenth century kenotic theories were used to account for the presence of God in Jesus,<sup>1</sup> Barth has shown that it is precisely because God is God that He could enter into union with man without in any way threatening man or dominating him. Because God is God in His free grace, His freedom to be Himself is the basis of man's freedom to be himself and therefore truly man. But in two other respects Barth has not advanced as far as some of the theologians mentioned above. First, Barth holds that Christ assumed fallen human nature and that He presented that human nature sinless, through His own act of obedience to grace, to God, but he says very little of the victorious struggle which Christ enacted so to convert human nature. Second, Barth almost completely ignores the work of the Spirit in this victory of Christ. These two weaknesses

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1. C.D. IV/1, pp. 180-3.



are related since Christ's warfare in, and conversion of, human nature was a battle conducted in the power of the Spirit.

In order to assess Barth's doctrine of the human essence of Christ, we will first look at Christ's person and then, second, at the life-act of his person. In this way it will be possible to see the significance of Barth's failure to give proper weight to the battle waged by Jesus in the Spirit, and, in particular, it will become clear that it involves a great loss for the understanding of the conversion of men to God.

#### Human Essence in the Person of Christ

The Creed confesses that Jesus Christ was 'conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary...', and thereby witnesses both to the fallen origin of His humanity and also to His sanctification by the Holy Spirit.

Barth also confesses both the fallenness and the sinlessness of Christ, but the reader of the Dogmatics is unable to suppress a question about his grasp of the tension involved in such an astounding confession. For a theologian who has so successfully combatted static conceptions of God and of man, as well as static conceptions of the person of Christ, the reader is surprised that Barth makes so little of what was the greatest and most all-inclusive of the acts of Christ, his wrestling with the power of sin. If, as Barth states, Christ's sinlessness was not intrinsic to Him, but His act, by what power did Christ live out this grace of sinlessness? Barth's answer is: by the grace of the hypostatic union.

This answer is inadequate to explain the warfare of Jesus as man against sin, since it attributes to Jesus a power which is not available to other men. Certainly, Barth insists that this is a union of grace, and therefore does not alter Jesus' human nature, but it locates the victory above the human nature and not within it. We must still ask Barth: what is the power of the grace of the hypostatic union such that the Word does not mitigate the full onslaught of the conflict waged in flesh against sin? Following the Creed and the Gospels, the answer must be that the Word took flesh through the Holy Spirit, and therefore did not alter flesh or guarantee its sinlessness from above but sanctified it from within. Thus, Jesus was sinless, not because He was united with the Word, but because He received the Word and obeyed it in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> This reference to the Spirit is indispensable because the Spirit is that power of God

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1. In arguing this against Barth it is not suggested that either the Word was not the Subject in Jesus Christ or that the Spirit-filled man performed the salvation of the world. Rather it is being argued that Jesus Christ was man as other men are men. Cf. H. Hartwell, The Theology of Karl Barth (Duckworth, London, 1964), pp. 185f., who suggests that 'it is not impossible to think of the Subject of the person of Jesus Christ as being from the beginning both human and divine,...the Spirit of God (Jn. 4: 24) blending at the Incarnation and in a manner we cannot understand with the human centre of consciousness, the human ego.' Hartwell's suggestion is helpful because he points to the place of the Spirit, and it also gives the human willing a more essential place than is always the case in Barth, who sometimes gives the impression that the divine Subject swallows up the human subject. Hartwell's idea of the one divine-human Subject in Christ through the Spirit is the one outlined in this chapter: there are not two subjects in the one person of the Word, but, by the Spirit, the Word assumed Spirit-filled flesh into union with Himself so that we do not have an abstract human nature but one whose ego is united with the Word.

in which He indwells both the Father and the Son, indwelling Them without displacing Them but rather by confirming Them as Father and Son, and therefore, when He indwells the flesh of Christ, He does not displace the flesh but brings it to its truth as flesh, confirming it in its own identity. If the sanctification of Christ's flesh is attributed to union with the Word without reference to the Spirit the nature of the Word is altered, because He achieves His purpose without the Spirit - Word is separated from Spirit -, and the nature of flesh is altered, because it achieves its response without the Spirit, and therefore is made intrinsically capable of response to God. The address of the Word is made to sanctify without the indwelling of the Spirit. Even if the graciousness of this Word is underlined, as Barth very properly does, this remains true.

Barth does not ignore the Holy Spirit in the actual event of the incarnation.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, he argues that Jesus' birth from the Spirit meant that His humanity was conceived in the freedom of God which also gave it the freedom to be free, true, man. The fact that His birth was not as ours is granted Him true humanity.

It is not with His birth as it is with ours;...His human existence begins in the freedom of God Himself, in the freedom in which the Father and the Son are one in the bond of love, in the Holy Spirit. When we look at the origin of Jesus we ought therefore to look into this depth of the Godhead, in which the Father and the Son are one. This is the freedom of the innermost life of God, and in this existence there begins the existence of this man, A.D. 1.

(Dogmatik im Grundriss, p. 115 (my trans.))

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1. See, e.g., C.D. I/2, p. 199.



It should be noted in this connection that the birth of Jesus in the Spirit answers a difficulty many have felt with the doctrines of enhypostasis and anhypostasis. If the man Jesus has His origin in the freedom of God, the freedom in which He is the Creator Spirit, and if it is through this Spirit that the Word takes this man into union with Himself, then the fact that Jesus has no independent hypostasis does not threaten but rather establishes His free humanity. As Jesus was born without a human father and in the freedom of the Creator Spirit, so those who receive Him are 'born not... of the will of man, but of God.' (Jn. 1: 13), and so, if we have no fear of attributing our life as regenerate men to the action of the Word through the Holy Spirit, we ought to have no fear in attributing the life of the perfectly regenerate man to the same source.

Barth fails to continue this excellent insight beyond the event of the incarnation into the actual life of the incarnate One. There is almost complete silence in the Dogmatics about the work of the Spirit throughout Jesus' life and ministry.<sup>1</sup> It is noticeable that even in his account of the incarnation he is as much concerned to stress the absence of human possibility as he is to speak of the positive power of the Spirit to accomplish in man what is impossible for man to do without Him.

This silence is particularly evident in his great,

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1. The excellent footnote C.D. IV/2, pp. 323-30 is not sufficient to establish the integral place of the Spirit in the wrestling of Jesus for holiness.



extended discussion of the vere homo in IV/2. The account of the hypostatic union there makes no integral use of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Barth does not, of course, deny the continuing operation of the Spirit in Christ, and in footnotes he mentions it, but the fact remains that he can discuss the vere homo at what he believes to be adequate length without making the doctrine of the Spirit an integral part of his affirmation.

It seems proper, then, to make the following observations.

1. Barth seems to have neglected his own belief and doctrine that Word and Spirit may not be separated, but always work together. In I/2 he said:

The very possibility of human nature's being adopted into union with the Son of God is the Holy Ghost. Here, then, at this frontal point in revelation, the Word of God is not without the Spirit of God.  
(C.D. I/2, p. 199)

Barth has failed to develop his own perception. This is all the more surprising as he develops his perception with great power in relation to the Word of the risen Christ, i.e., the self-communication of Christ in His resurrection in the power and holiness of the Spirit of God. Why does Barth neglect the fundamental relation, inherent in God Himself, between Word and Spirit when he comes to speak of the life-act of the Word made flesh? It may be fear of Nestorianism, i.e., the fear that Jesus may come to be thought of as the Spirit-filled man whose act is merely parallel to and not identical with the act of the Word. Is it not rather a failure to bring the doctrine of the Trinity into full involvement with the life-act of Jesus Christ? - a failure, that is, to show that in the incarnate One not only

the self-humbling Son but also God the Spirit were unfolding the inner riches of God Himself in such a manner that the inner life of God could overflow and actually dwell in man. For in the flesh of Jesus Christ it was not only the Word who was imparted to man, but the Spirit who, as the richness of God's own inner being, opened man's inner being to receive the self-impartation of the Word. As in the life of the Trinity the connection of Word and Spirit is the freedom of God to give Himself (Word) without losing Himself (the Spirit as the bond of union), so in the incarnate One the connection of Word and Spirit is the freedom of God to give Himself to man so that man freely responds to that self-impartation without losing or dissipating it. In this union of Word and Spirit, the flesh of the incarnate One becomes the bearer of the externalisation of the inner riches of God. In this union of Word and Spirit, then, the flesh of the incarnate One becomes the bearer of the self-unfolding of the inner riches of God. In this way, the flesh of Jesus receives the Word and remains steadfastly faithful to it (through the indwelling of the Spirit): there takes place in flesh the victorious contest against sin, death and Satan. Flesh, which was under the condemnation of God, condemns sin in the flesh. Flesh vindicates itself against the Accuser.<sup>1</sup> It does

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1. Barth's friend, Pierre Maury, seems to have understood more clearly than Barth himself, the importance of Jesus' answer to the devil. Maury sees that God answers the devil through the obedience of the man Jesus. In C.D. IV/3 Barth displays profound insight into Jesus' response to the Father as prefigured in Job, but he does not stress that this defeated the devil.

'What [God] must have was the wonderful response which he received in the filial obedience of Jesus of Nazareth, the first to call him Father in all truth, in order for his

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not do this in its own strength - it does it solely through the indwelling of the Spirit - but for that very reason it is flesh which wins the contest. It is the glory and justification of God that His creature defeat the Accuser. He stakes His own glory on the victory of His creature. Thus Jesus in the flesh is the bearer of the inner riches of God. His victory in flesh, through the Spirit, is the vindication and glory of God Himself, for in Him God's not repenting of having created man is justified. And if this is true, it must also be true that in this victory God increased His own glory, enriching Himself through the actualisation of His inner riches in the flesh of man. Only if He won this victory as man could He vindicate the Creator and only if He received the Word in the power of the indwelling Spirit could He do it as man. Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity needs to be brought into full involvement in the doctrine of the life-act of Jesus Christ, and Barth's discussion of the vere homo suffers because he does not do so.

2. If it is the case that Barth allows the Word to operate without the Spirit in the life-act of Jesus Christ, the nature of the Word has been altered from that of He who does not achieve the response of human nature without the indwelling Spirit to that of He who dominates and overpowers

Contd.) purpose to be fulfilled, that unchanged purpose of him in whom 'we live and move and have our being'. (Acts 17: 28); in order that the Tempter of Genesis, and of the desert where Jesus withstood him for forty days, might be shown to be the impotent liar who tries to pervert the work of the Creator, asserting to God's face, as in the prologue to the Book of Job, that none loves God disinterestedly (Job 1: 1-9). The fact is that Job, mysteriously prefiguring Jesus of Nazareth, is the man who does really love because he is loved.' P. Maury, Predestination, trans. R. Mackie (S.C.M., London, 1960), p. 34.



human nature. It is the Word and not the Spirit who indwells man and creates the response of man. Barth is careful to avoid saying anything of this kind, yet because he has the Word operating without necessary reference to the indwelling Spirit, the Word has to do the work of the indwelling Spirit, and therefore inevitably has the character of mingling with human nature.

3. Not only the Word, but human nature itself is altered. Human nature is altered from that which achieves its response to the Word only through the Spirit into that which responds solely through union with the Word. Inevitably the nature of man's response is altered. But when the hypostatic union is spoken of as union with the Word and indwelling by the Spirit - when the different functions of Word and Spirit are respected - then man's response is fully his own, made from the centre of his willing at the place where the free Creator Spirit frees him for his true creaturely response. Indwelt by this Spirit, he is not displaced but freed to be himself.

4. The combination of points 2 and 3 make the question of Eutychianism unavoidable. Barth has taken great care to avoid any suggestion of a mingling or confusion of the divine and the human in Christ. He says that 'Joined in the One who is very God and very man, they [divine and human essence] are always as different as God and man are different.'<sup>1</sup> But if they are joined without the Holy Spirit's continuous act of union, how can the Word and flesh exist

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1. C.D. IV/2, pp. 115-6.

together in common activation without merging into each other? Edward Irving's bold words are relevant here:

...as His conception was, such also was His life; His constitution never changing; being in the embryo what it was in the man of stature; being in the humiliation what it was in the exaltation...the development of its power and glory being the only cause of apparent change. And what is this wonderful constitution of the Christ of God? It is the substance of the Godhead in the person of the Son, and the substance of the creature in the state of fallen manhood, united, yet not mixed, but most distinct for ever. And is this all? No: this is not all. With humility let it be spoken, but yet with truth and verity, that the fallen humanity could not have been sanctified and redeemed by the union of the Son alone; which directly leadeth unto an inmixing and confusing of the Divine with the human nature, that pestilent heresy of Eutyches. The human nature is thoroughly fallen; and without a thorough communication, inhabitation and empowering of a Divine substance, it cannot again be brought up pure and holy. The mere apprehension of it by the Son doth not make it holy. Such a union leads directly to the apotheosis or deification of the creature, and again does away with the mystery of the Trinity in the Godhead.

(Doctrine of Incarnation, pp. 123-4)

If there is no acknowledgement of the indwelling Spirit in Jesus' human nature, His human nature is no longer freely itself: it is made perfect through the 'inmixing' of the Son. Two consequences of the utmost seriousness for the theme of this study follow, (a) man is robbed of the conversion of his fallen nature and (b) God is robbed of the manifestation of His glory and justification of His purpose, since man does not as man defeat Satan. Irving's words are worth hearing:

He was the person of the Eternal Son, manifesting forth the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Ghost, as well as the word of the Son, in manhood, yea, fallen manhood. He took up the creature in its lowest estate, in order to justify God therein, by proving how good even that estate was; verily to prove that it was holy.

(Doctrine of Incarnation, p. 124)

It cannot seriously be maintained that Barth is Eutychian, but his failure to allow the Holy Spirit His proper

place in the life-act of Jesus Christ does leave him vulnerable to the two charges just noted. Barth does note that Jesus in His historical obedience justified God,<sup>1</sup> but he does not draw out the fact that it was as man that He did so. There would be no special glory for God to defeat sin and Satan: but for God so to humble Himself in the Word and so to indwell man in the Spirit that man as man defeats the Accuser is the very actualisation of God's glory.

The Life-Act of Jesus Christ, with special reference to His human essence

The discussion of the preceding section concerned the constitution of the person of Christ, and was particularly interested in showing that it is only if the presence of the Trinity, and especially of the Holy Spirit, is acknowledged in Christ that it is possible to speak of man as man, vere homo, defeating evil and being elevated to be with God. This section will be concerned with the conflict and victory of that vere homo, and with the kind of salvation which that unique humanity realised for other men.

No-one doubts that it was salvation which Christ achieved for man when He assumed human nature, but the understanding of that salvation depends on the prior understanding of what He did in our human nature. His humanity is saving humanity because it is unique. If that uniqueness is primarily understood as the uniqueness of the humanity of the Lord, it will not be the conflict and victory of that humanity

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1. C.D. II/2, p. 123.



which constitutes its saving uniqueness so much as the fact that in it the Lord acted to save men from sin. If, however, that uniqueness is understood primarily as sinlessness - as the victory over sin - its saving uniqueness will be understood as fundamentally freeing men for a life victorious over sin. This second emphasis entails the understanding of Christ's saving uniqueness as His conversion of human nature.

Properly understood, the first emphasis (on the human nature of the Word) leads on to the second emphasis (on the sinlessness of Jesus). If (as Barth shows) the Word is He who gave Himself to human essence, addressing Himself in pure grace to man and thus elevating man to be the pure recipient of grace - if that is the grace of the hypostatic union, then flesh is activated by grace, and therefore activated to wage war and to achieve sinlessness in exactly the same way and through the same grace as other men should but do not. The election of grace which is implied in the hypostatic union means that Jesus is destined for sinlessness, but that this predestination was the handing over of His humanity to live entirely by grace. In no sense did it mean that He was preserved from sinning by powers not available to other men. His election meant no easier battle. On the contrary, because it was the election of grace and union with the grace of the Son of God, He was committed to the battle which all others shirk but which He must carry through to the end. One could say that His union with the Word meant that He was 'imprisoned', 'cornered' by grace, if these words **did not** imply the opposite of the liberation which grace brings. Perhaps a better way of expressing it is to say that grace

frees man and that men fear freedom, but Jesus was the one man who faced that fear and lived wholly by grace, thus being freely, truly man.

Whatever may be the best way of expressing this, it is clear that the grace of the hypostatic union leads us to say that Jesus was sinless in the same way that other men should be but are not. If this is true, the nature of the grace of the hypostatic union must be developed further in the direction of the grace of sinlessness than does Barth: it must be specified as the grace of the Holy Spirit. It then becomes clear that Christ was indwelt by that power of God which did not displace His human willing, but empowered it for obedience. The Word was united with flesh through the Holy Spirit, and therefore the flesh of Christ received and obeyed the Word as all men should, the decisive difference between His humanity and theirs being that He, filled with the Spirit, obeyed grace wholly. The flesh of Christ achieved sinlessness by faith in the Word and empowering by the Spirit. This may be expressed in a paradoxical way by saying that, because of its union with the Word, the flesh of Christ was sinless without relying on its union with the Word. The paradox is dissolved by the fact that this union was by the Holy Spirit, and therefore flesh obeyed not because of its union with the Word but because it was filled with the Spirit. Of course, Barth's doctrine of the hypostatic union as a union of grace, and therefore that flesh was sinless not by a special status but by act, implies the 'paradox' just noted, but his doctrine does need this further specification of the Holy Spirit because only then does it become clear what it was on the human

side which enabled Jesus actively to obey the address of divine grace. Barth has specified only the grace of the hypostatic union from the divine side, not from its corresponding human side. It should be added immediately that Barth's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as the subjective reality of revelation, seems to call for this added specification.

When this further step is taken, and the uniqueness of Christ's human nature is seen in this second light as His sinlessness, the nature of the salvation which He accomplished is specified as the conversion of human nature. If this step is neglected, and His uniqueness specified only as His union with the Word, the conversion of human nature which He achieved is not communicable to other men because it was achieved in a way in which these other men cannot participate, since they are not united with the Word. But when the uniqueness of His human nature is specified as the union with the Word by the Holy Spirit, His conversion of human nature is communicable to other men: it is a conversion of their human nature, since it is conversion through the indwelling of the Spirit, just as theirs is. Without mention of the Spirit, the power which empowered His flesh is left out of account, and therefore the conversion of human nature in Christ is of a different kind from that in **other men**.

What is lacking in Barth may best be indicated by pointing to the New Testament witness to Jesus as the Spirit-filled man. There is no space in this study to discuss this at any length, but it must be noted that all the Gospels show the Spirit descending on Jesus after His self-commitment to



sinners in the Jordan, and that they frequently point to the continued indwelling of the Spirit in Him as He prosecuted His warfare against the devil and as He exercised compassion in bringing in the Kingdom. The writer to the Hebrews gives powerful witness to Jesus learning obedience through His sufferings and to His being perfected.<sup>1</sup> He says that Christ offered Himself without blemish to God through the eternal Spirit. Gathering together the range of the New Testament evidence, it seems proper to say that Jesus completed His baptism in Jordan through His baptism of fire of His cross. In that self-offering in the Spirit,<sup>2</sup> He perfected His compassionate self-commitment to sinners, loving them as Himself and bearing their diseases and sins in His own body.<sup>3</sup> By

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1. teleiōtheis egeneto (Heb. 5: 9). The Greek verb teleō and cognates implies a dynamic movement toward fulfilment and contrasts with the Western idea of a timeless, static perfection. In relation to Christ, His being perfected through His suffering and obedience must mean that His flawless holiness was unfolded and proved throughout His life until it reached its fulfilment in the supreme testing of the cross.
  2. Heb. 9: 14. Cf. R.S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1959), p. 8.
  3. It has already been noted (Chapter V, p. ) that Barth understands Christ's compassion as that righteousness whereby He loves others as Himself and so bears their griefs and sins as His own. Interpreting the verb splagchnizesthai he says: 'What it means is that the suffering and sin and abandonment and peril of these men (i.e., those who Jesus encountered) not merely went to the heart of Jesus, but right into His heart, into Himself, so that their whole plight was now His own, and as such He suffered it far more keenly than they did.' C.D. III/2, p. 211. It is suggested here that it was by the Holy Spirit, that power of God whereby He enters into the inner depths without displacing them but rather by making them more sensitive, that Jesus compassionated in this sense.

the indwelling Spirit His tender love for others was broadened and deepened - in sum, perfected - so that He felt and knew their sin as His own: such was the victory over the temptations of the devil through which the Spirit led Him.

A number of points of importance for this study emerge from this witness to Jesus' life in the Spirit.

1. Jesus' human nature was both fallen and sinless. He came in 'the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8: 3). This cannot be understood as a paradox but only as the fruit of the most awesome victory of His holy obedience to the Word through the Spirit. It was through the law of the Spirit of life that He condemned sin and triumphed over the law of sin and death.

2. Jesus thus converted sinful human nature into righteous human nature. This may not be interpreted to mean that Jesus progressed in holiness in the sense that He began unholy and ended holy. Jesus was holy from the moment of His conception by the Spirit (Lk. 1: 35), and He needed no progress in holiness.<sup>1</sup> He unfolded through the most rigorous testing His spotless holiness, and in this sense perfected it. Only in the jaws of the ultimate testing could He win the conversion of human nature; only as faced with the most radical temptation to sin could He prove humanity as perfectly righteous humanity. Psalm 22 gives the experience of One who felt forsaken by the God on whom He had cast Himself 'from the womb'. Because He remained steadfast even at this ultimate point, the rebellious humanity

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1. E. Irving, Christ's Holiness in Flesh, pp. 76-93.

He took from His mother was proved perfectly faithful to the Creator.<sup>1</sup>

3. Jesus' righteousness is thus to be understood as His victory against the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. As Mark's Gospel indicates, the battle with Satan was particularly intense: Jesus overpowered the strong man (Satan) who had usurped God's place in man. Barth is not at all helpful on this unremitting and full-scale contest which was Christ's from the moment of His baptism to His hurling back the gates of Hades.

4. While it cannot be said that Barth ignores these points, it is undeniable that he underplays the tension in Jesus' life. Granted that Jesus was bound to be victorious, and that Barth does not say that the earthly is only the shadow of what was played out in heaven, Barth shies clear of entering into the wrestling in the strength of the Spirit which took place in Christ's flesh in order to fulfill God's eternal will.

It is now possible to make a series of points about God's self-commitment to Jesus which enables Him to communicate Jesus' conversion of human nature to sinners.

1. Jesus was the Spirit-filled man who was perfected in His self-offering on the cross.

2. To regard Jesus from this perspective in no way endangers the truth that it was the Son of God who was the acting Subject in the life of Jesus Christ. Some of the figures who have stressed Jesus as the Spirit-filled man may have suggested that the Son of God was passive during

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1. ibid., pp. 16-17.



His incarnation,<sup>1</sup> but Barth has shown very clearly that the activity of the Son includes His freedom to be obedient and to suffer. The Son willed not His will but His Father's will; He handed Himself over to the betrayer and He handed over His life. Even in His death, He was the acting Subject. This understanding of the act of the Son of God allows us to say both that the Son of God was the active Subject in Jesus Christ and that He was also the Spirit-filled man. No tension exists between these two statements. God actively obeyed and suffered as did also his human nature. But it must be added that this common activation of the divine and the human took place through the Holy Spirit. The Son of God activated Himself through the eternal Spirit; the Son of man activated Himself also through the Spirit of God; and the union of both in Jesus Christ was also by the Spirit. It is important to stress this, not only to guarantee the undiminished humanity of Christ, but also the guard against Nestorianism, for, unless it is understood that the divine and human were held together by the Spirit who indwelt them both, indwelling them as the Spirit of the inner union of the Creator both ab intra and ad extra, it will seem that God and man merely coincided in perfect common activity and were not united in the one person. If the activity of the Spirit is honoured in the hypostatic union, the suggestion of Nestorianism which R. Prenter detects in Barth's Christology<sup>2</sup> will be

1. G.S. Strachan, The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving (Dartman, Longman and Todd, London, 1973), p. 224.
2. R. Prenter, 'Karl Barths Umbildung der traditionellen Zweinaturlehre in lutherischen Beleuchtung', Studia Theologica XI, 1957, pp. 1-87, esp. pp. 22ff.

obviated, as will also the suggestion of Eutychianism which was noted above,<sup>1</sup>

3. If the act of majesty of God in Christ's incarnation is understood in this way, it is necessary to say that there was a self-movement within the triune God such that He became the Redeemer of sinners in a way in which He was not previously.<sup>2</sup>

(a) The Son of God was not unaffected by His incarnate life. There was a new actualisation of eternal grace such that He entered the depths of man's sin there to rescue and convert him. Barth would agree with this statement but it must be added that by His union with the Spirit-filled man He became Son of the Father in a sense in which He was not previously. Through His lowly life, death and resurrection He became Head of the new humanity, the One in whom sinners are born again sons of God. He assumed Adam's fallen humanity; He was baptised into repentance for sinners; He was baptised in the Spirit, so that in Him mankind 'took a step above its original creation,....[becoming] the residence of God, his house to dwell in, his tongue to speak, his hand to act';<sup>3</sup> He

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1. Cf. C. O'Grady, The Church in Catholic Theology (G. Chapman, London, 1969), p. 70. O'Grady seeks to avoid both Nestorianism and Eutychianism by stressing the 'sub-operation' of Christ's humanity in our salvation, but this study hopes to give His humanity a more realistic place than does Barth by honouring the work of the Spirit, and thus also overcoming any suggestion of synergism and Pelagianism.
  2. 'The fulness of God's love is only conceivable in the "growing together" experience of the Father-Son relationship in the Spirit.' G.A.F. Knight, A Biblical Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, No. 1 (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1953), p. 66.
  3. E. Irving, Christ's Holiness in Flesh, pp. 18-9.

fulfilled righteous repentance for sinners by His self-offering on the cross by the eternal Spirit; and He was 'designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead' (Rom. 1: 3), the resurrection in which we have been born again to a living hope (I Pet. 1: 3). Through His death and resurrection for sinners, He became a life-giving Spirit (I Cor. 15: 45). Thus, not through His incarnation as such, but through that perfection of His always completely holy God-manhood and its manifestation in His resurrection from the dead, He makes dead sinners to live as sons of God. In this sense, it is correct to speak of a progressive filiation of the Son of the Father, an unfolding and augmentation of His perfect sonship of the Father in the Spirit through birth, baptism, transfiguration, and resurrection.<sup>1</sup> When this development in Christ is seen, it is possible to see how He could convert sinners without automatically including them in Himself, for it becomes clear that, through the perfection of His self-offering in the Spirit for the purification of sinners, He comes to them as the life-giving Spirit: i.e., 'in the power of the Spirit, by which we are born again in Christ and become new creatures.'<sup>2</sup> The tendency in Barth to regard Christ's humanity in the incarnation as universal humanity, as 'the humanum of all

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1. Psalm 2: 7: 'You are my son, today I have begotten you,' is quoted in the New Testament in relation to Christ's resurrection (Acts 13: 33), and the words 'You are my son' are spoken at both His baptism and transfiguration. Clearly His eternal Sonship was not static but dynamic.
  2. J. Calvin, Commentary on St. John, trans. T.H.L. Parker (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1959), comment on Jn. 7: 38, p. 199.



men,<sup>1</sup> inevitably involves Christology in a Platonic tendency<sup>2</sup> unless it is clear that the Son of God, who gives His humanity its representative power, became the Creator of the new humanity only through His death and resurrection in the Spirit. If, as Barth (together with the early Fathers) holds, Christ by His incarnation 'assumed an ontological relation with mankind' such that 'the work of Christ done for man was done in man prior to its appropriation by man',<sup>3</sup> it is equally true that this position can be delivered from Platonism and impersonality only if it insisted, with Calvin, that Christ through His death and resurrection recreates men only as His Spirit comes on them and that He establishes a different union from that established in the incarnation.<sup>4</sup> Put simply: Christ the Word in whom all are created became the life-giving Spirit not by His incarnation but by the fulfillment of His incarnate life in His resurrection by the Spirit, and therefore He recreates men only as His Spirit comes on them.

(b) The Spirit was not unaffected by His being all of one 'bundle' with the incarnate One. He comes in a new form, coming with the experience of the conversion of humanity in Christ, and therefore coming as the Spirit of the conversion of men. A doctrine of this kind is not an innovation and can be found in the work of two Scottish theologians,

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1. C.D. IV/2, p. 49.

2. R. Prenter, art. cit., pp. 75-7.

3. G.S. Hendry, The Gospel of the Incarnation (S.C.M., London, 1959), p. 62.

4. ibid., pp. 69-70.

Wotherspoon and Milligan. It is worth quoting a summary of their teaching:

Christ's own human nature had to be perfected in every respect, in life, death, resurrection and ascension, before the Spirit could descend without measure on humanity....The Spirit who comes at Pentecost comes in a new relation, in a new mode of His being. Obviously the Spirit who comes to the Church is still the Spirit in all His divine majesty and glory, the Spirit of life and creative power. But the Spirit who comes now is not a naked Spirit, in all the exclusiveness of His own deity, but is the Spirit charged with all the experiences of Christ, as He shared to the full our mortal nature and weakness, and endured its temptations; griefs, suffering and death. He comes tingling with the experiences of Christ as He struggled and prayed, worshipped and obeyed, and poured out His life in compassion for mankind. He comes attempered to our humanity, coloured now with Christ's glorified humanity, as the Spirit of the risen Christ, the Spirit of victory and heavenly inheritance.

(J. Walker, unpublished paper: The Holy Spirit)

Barth is unable to affirm this at all strongly, since he places so little importance on the Spirit in the struggle and victory of Jesus.

The Spirit not only comes with this new experience: He also comes in a new mode. The fourth Gospel dares to say: 'The Spirit was not yet, for Jesus was not yet glorified.' (Jn. 7: 39). Thus, through the death and resurrection of Jesus (His glorification) God Himself comes in a new mode. It is scarcely incorrect to say that God Himself becomes Spirit in a sense in which He was not previously. W. Milligan says:

He [the Spirit] is not so much the Third Person of the Trinity in His original and absolute existence, as that Spirit in the effect produced upon Him by the economy of salvation, that as Spirit, He is the bond, not between God and the Eternal Word alone, but between the Father and the incarnate Son; or that Spirit as He is the Spirit of the Christ from whom in His combined natures proceed all the blessings of the covenant of grace. (Ascension and Heavenly Priesthood of our Lord, p. 193)

As was noted in the previous chapter, Barth argues that the Spirit is the Spirit who imparts Jesus Christ to other men since He is antecedently the Spirit of the fellowship between the Father and the Son in the Trinity, but, in the light of the above it must further be said that God Himself in the Spirit is now able to bridge the chasm between Himself and sinners because He Himself, for the first time but also perfectly and finally, went in the Spirit to the depths of sin in the man Jesus. That the Spirit is the bond of union between the Father and the Son in the eternal Trinity qualifies Him only to bridge the distance between Himself and other men, but that He is the Spirit who was the union between the Father and the man Jesus as He bore the sin of the world qualifies Him to overcome the chasm between Christ and sinners. Because Barth is weak at this point, he is not as strong as he appears to be on the impartation of the conversion of man in Christ to sinners.

Barth does not give Pentecost its full status as the coming of God in His new mode of being. Through His perfection in the Spirit, Jesus became the repository of the Spirit, the Man qualified to reign at the right hand of God. He became the life-giving Spirit, the Word of God who was also the Seed of God who, having fallen into the ground and died, now brings forth much fruit, multiplying, as it were, His life in those who are reborn through Him. He does this through pouring forth the gift of the Spirit which he received of the Father. This Spirit is also the Spirit who 'was' only after God Himself gave Himself in the history of Jesus. He is God Himself who has been to the depths in Jesus and has not



been rent asunder but has affirmed His unity with Himself, and has thus enriched Himself through His own history. As God who proceeds from this self-giving - proceeding from the riven side of the Lamb - He comes in a new mode of enriched inner unity, and falls on sinners to indwell and convert them. Because He has conquered the alienation of sinners in Himself, His inner riches now indwell sinners and become in them rivers of living water welling up into eternal life. Thus Pentecost is the 'final goal of the divine economy on earth.'<sup>1</sup>

(c) The Father also received a new actualisation of His eternal Fatherhood. In a moving passage Barth says:

...there is a particula veri in the teaching of the early Patristians. This is that primarily it is God the Father who suffers in the offering and sending of His Son, in His abasement. The suffering is not His own, but the alien suffering of the creature, of man, which He takes to Himself in Him. But He does suffer it in the humiliation of His Son....This fatherly fellow-suffering of God is the mystery, the basis, of the humiliation of His Son; the truth which takes place historically in His crucifixion.

(C.D. IV/2, p. 357)

This deep insight could well form the basis of a doctrine of the further realisation of the Father's eternal Fatherhood such that, in the Spirit, He is the Father in the promised sense that He now dwells in sinners who have been raised up as His sons (Jn. 14: 23). Through the fatherly fellow-suffering of the Father, He became the Father of sons: the inner riches of the fatherhood of God were unfolded through

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1. V. Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (James Clark, London, 1957), p. 159.

His self-giving so that those who were not worthy to be called his sons now are indwelt by Him.

These aspects of Christian doctrine have been developed in order to show that if the doctrine of the Trinity is brought into closer relationship with the life perfected by Jesus of Nazareth, an even richer understanding of the conversion of man than Barth describes can be won for the Church.

## CHAPTER VIII

### JESUS IS VICTOR

The Christology of Barth's Dogmatics IV/3 is at once the most exciting and the most disappointing of his entire Dogmatics. It shows Christ in His fullness and glory opening up a fullness and glory for men, and yet at the central point - where Jesus is the Victor in such a way that He opens up victory for us men - Barth fails to give his doctrine the decisive content it needs. In the outline of this Christology which now follows it will become clear that the glory of the Mediator, which is the theme of this section of the Dogmatics calls for more radical treatment.

Jesus Christ lives.<sup>1</sup>

This simple truth contains a great and complex range of truth. Jesus Christ is Himself the reality of the reconciliation of God and man. He Himself is the content, and therefore the pledge and guarantee, of the reconciliation made in Him. In Dogmatics IV/1 Barth spoke of the God-manward movement in Him; in Dogmatics IV/2 he spoke of the man-Godward movement in Him; but now in Dogmatics IV/3 Barth speaks of the movement of the God-man outward toward other men. The first two perspectives taken together exhaust the material content of the doctrine of Christ,<sup>2</sup> but this third perspective is necessary to show that the life in Him radiates out to men and makes them alive. Christ lives not for Himself but for others, and therefore in the fulfillment of His life He

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1. C.D. IV/3, p. 39.

2. ibid., Editors' Preface, p. ix; C.D. IV/1, p. 136.



will not be alone any more than will God Himself be without His people. Thus, the content of reconciliation which is actual in Jesus Christ (as demonstrated in Dogmatics IV/1 and IV/2) shines out to other men in such a way that they are called to serve Him and actively to participate in the life in Him. As the pledge and the guarantee of the reconciliation made in Him (as demonstrated in Dogmatics IV/3) He gives men the sure hope of eternal life and they live in this hope as they follow Him in His progress through history to its consummation. He is the hope of the world, and they actively share in His self-attestation, i.e., His truth.

It is impossible in this study to do justice to the rich and complex truth which radiates from the living Jesus. Some aspects, however, should be particularly noted. The first and fundamental point is this. We have to do with the living person of Jesus Christ, not with doctrines about Him or with impersonal forces. Barth emphasises that Jesus lives in His act.<sup>1</sup> He lives in the act of His self-actualisation. This is the meaning of His personal being. But it must be remembered that His existence is the being together in act of both God and man. As O'Grady puts it:

That he lives means that His existence is act, actualization of being in sovereign spontaneity after the manner of God, and also actualization in limited spontaneity after the manner of the creature. (Church in the Theology of Karl Barth, p. 160)

Because He is this person, we must note, second, that His glory is not empty but full and radiates out to men. He lives in the very act of communicating Himself. He is light, and His light shines out to men, shining in the enlightening

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1. ibid., p. 41.

power of the life which He is. He is truth, active truth, and therefore He attests His truth, proving Himself to be the One He is. He is life, and as He lives He communicates the life in Him. Finally, we must note that, since He lives as this active being together of God and man, He reveals Himself and manifests His glory in such a way that men are brought to know themselves in His light. He is the Prophet,<sup>1</sup> making known the truth of God and man.<sup>2</sup> This making known is active and not passive, and therefore in making Himself known as the Word of God He calls men into the service of His self-attestation. This is the goal of His personal act and it is the point which must be stressed here. The glory of the Mediator shines out to men so that, as the men they are, they actively attest the active being together of God and man in Him.

Since Jesus Christ is this person, He manifests His glory only as He lives His history of conquering man's resistance to Him and as He brings them to witness actively to Him. As He reveals Himself as the One in whom the reconciliation of the world is actual, He encounters the world's opposition and He overcomes it. His revelation of Himself has a dramatic, warring character.<sup>3</sup>

In general terms, this means that:

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1. Jesus Christ not only speaks the Word of God: He is the Word of God (ibid., p. 96).
  2. Jesus Christ is 'the total and complete declaration of God concerning Himself and the men whom He addresses in His Word.' (ibid., p. 99). He Himself guarantees the truth of His Word (p. 103). He has no need of proof: He proves Himself to be the One He claims to be.
  3. ibid., p. 180.

as the event of reconciliation is also that of... prophecy,...it emerges from the apparent distance in which it is played out for us men, and comes to affect us directly, so that we are not merely implicated in its occurrence, but realise that it is the case. (C.D. IV/3, p. 181)

In the occurrence of the prophecy of Jesus Christ, He establishes knowledge of Himself and as He does so the world opposes Him.<sup>1</sup> (Barth argues that knowledge of Jesus Christ is not 'the acquisition of neutral information',<sup>2</sup> but knowledge which affects the whole man'; it is an event.<sup>3</sup>) In Jesus Christ the light of the reconciliation of the world shines into the darkness of the world,<sup>4</sup> meeting it and overcoming it.<sup>5</sup> This is the warfare of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

The story of Paul's 'conversion' or metanoia illustrates this personal victory of Jesus. The 'primary' subject<sup>7</sup> in the story is Jesus of Nazareth. Certainly, the story speaks of Paul's decision, but his act follows Jesus' decision concerning him.<sup>8</sup> Paul's transformation can be understood only if we see that previously Saul resisted knowledge of Jesus (he kicked against the pricks), and that then 'Jesus made Paul acquainted with Himself.'<sup>9</sup> Jesus as acting Subject

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1. ibid., p. 185.

2. ibid., p. 183.

3. ibid., p. 191.

4. ibid., p. 191.

5. ibid., p. 196.

6. ibid., p. 197.

7. ibid., p. 198.

8. ibid., p. 198.

9. ibid., p. 202.



enlightened Saul.<sup>1</sup> Saul ceased to live. Christ now lived in him. He was a new man in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. 'The whole process typifies the event designated in the New Testament by the terms gnōsis and metanoia.'<sup>2</sup>

The atonement made in Jesus Christ may therefore be described as revelation which establishes active knowledge on the part of men.<sup>3</sup> It is a self-multiplying history, making itself known in the face of opposition. Barth makes four observations in this connection. (1) The distinction between the history of reconciliation and our participation in it is confirmed.<sup>4</sup> Ontic and noetic, objective and subjective, Jesus Christ and others do not merge into each other, but 'acquire the character of an encounter in which neither robs the other of its autonomy and distinctiveness, nor indeed of its specific place and function in the encounter.'<sup>5</sup> But (2) Jesus Christ and other men belong together<sup>6</sup> and (3) He comes to men in such a way that those who participate in knowledge of Him 'participate in the event of salvation itself.'<sup>7</sup> This happens as men come to genuine knowledge of Christ. Lest knowledge should seem too weak a word to carry what is involved here, (4) Barth protests against a devaluation of the concept of knowledge:

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1. ibid., p. 202.

2. ibid., p. 203.

3. ibid., p. 211.

4. ibid., p. 213.

5. ibid., pp. 213-4.

6. ibid., pp. 214ff.

7. ibid., p. 217.

What takes place in real Christian knowledge is... - here we are reminded again of the New Testament concept of metanoia - that the whole man with his possibilities and experiences and attitudes is grasped by the object which takes and retains the initiative in relation to him, and turned right around to face this object, to be wholly orientated on it. (C.D. IV/3, p. 220)

Christian knowledge is 'participation in His action.'

As a human action it takes place in participation in His action. It has not grasped at this participation; it can only receive it. Nor can it control this participation; it can only be continually given it. But as it takes place in this participation, His action, i.e., that of Jesus Christ, takes place in it as a human action. If it does so secondarily and not primarily, it does so no less really, and no more and no less as the work of reconciliation itself. In virtue of the fact that the event of salvation is also as such the revelation of salvation in the power of which it becomes the object, basis and content of human knowledge, Christian knowledge, as it receives this object, basis and content, and takes place with reference to it, is the knowledge of salvation. As such, however, it is obviously itself an event of salvation. (C.D. IV/3, p. 220)

This needs to be emphasised, especially as Barth holds that the ontological alteration of the human condition took place on the cross and in the resurrection of the incarnate One, and that Christ makes this known to men when they believe in Him. Some interpreters have taken this to mean that a man is virtually unaffected by his coming to faith,<sup>1</sup> whereas this passage shows that Barth speaks of Christian knowledge as an active thing which 'is obviously itself an event of salvation.'

Barth now attempts a sketch of the history in which the light of Jesus Christ shines and man is opened up to Him. It is the history of His victory. (1) Light begins to shine in darkness as God freely and graciously posits the gift of Jesus

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1. e.g. C. Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message (Tyndale Press, London, 1967), pp. 136f.

Christ in the world.<sup>1</sup> He, Christ, speaks for Himself, revealing and imparting Himself. (2) As He shines in the world, a history of conflict ensues. 'Jesus Christ opens the conflict.' The law of His action is imposed on His opponent and not vice-versa.<sup>2</sup> His attack is total and radical because He brings with Him nothing less than the radical alteration of the world.<sup>3</sup> On the negative side, men foolishly proceed as though nothing has happened, as though the old creation has not been passed over.<sup>4</sup> On the positive side, Jesus Christ proclaims the new man,<sup>5</sup> and the reality of this new existence is freely given to men. This is an attack on man as he is, and man puts himself on the defensive.<sup>6</sup> He 'cannot bear what is here said about the passing of the old man and the coming of the new.'<sup>7</sup> He tries to evade the Word (he cannot escape it); to set general world-views in its place; and, worst of all, he may realise that all resistance is futile and adopt the Word of grace for himself, attempting to render it innocuous.<sup>8</sup> There is an anti-Christian Church. (3) This conflict has a consummation, though theology must remember that this final word can be spoken only by the living Jesus Christ in His return in glory.<sup>9</sup>

1. C.D. IV/3, p. 221.

2. ibid., p. 239.

3. ibid., p. 241.

4. ibid., pp. 242-5.

5. ibid., pp. 245-9.

6. ibid., p. 251.

7. ibid., p. 251.

8. ibid., p. 258.

9. ibid., p. 261.



His victory is not yet consummated. Theology can only witness to the certainty of His victory. This certainty does not refer to the goal of human history, nor to the Church nor even to the inner certainty of Christian faith: the living Jesus Christ alone is the Victor.

This bare reference to Jesus' victory, correct as it is, may leave the impression that something magical takes place. To guard against this danger it must be seen that His superiority consists in the fact that He is the Word of the act of God, and that this Word 'appeals directly to the real man.'<sup>1</sup> His victory is not magical (though it is miraculous) because it does not operate despite man but works in man by overcoming the resisting element in him.

Barth now turns to the communication of Christ's life to us. Jesus Christ Himself presses this question on us. In His resurrection from the dead, He revealed the whole fullness of the reconciliation of the world with God. There was nothing lacking in Him, nothing which remained to be added. His consummation of world history at His final coming will be only the conclusive revelation of what He was at His first coming in His resurrection. Why, then, did He not there and then, at His resurrection, conclude world history? Would it not have been better if He had not posited this time between His first and His final parousia?

Why, when order and peace had been established between God and man in His life and death and powerfully enough proclaimed in His resurrection, did He will to entangle Himself first, and with Him the world, the community and ourselves, in the conflict against darkness still

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1. ibid., p. 270.

somehow remaining, against sin, evil and death as  
somehow still persisting forces?

(C.D. IV/3, p. 331)

Barth answers:

The answer is quite simply that it was His good will because it has as its aim the granting to and procuring for the creation reconciled to God in Him both time and space, not merely to see, but actively to share in the harvest which follows from the sowing of reconciliation. In willing this and not something supposedly better, Jesus Christ confirms Himself and His whole being and action. (C.D. IV/3, pp. 331-2)

Confirming His whole being and action, He also grants us to confirm our being and action in Him.

He does not will to be alone and without us, because He does not will to go over our heads, because He wills to give us a share in His work in our independence as the creatures of God summoned to freedom....And so He wills to give us time and space for participation in His work. He wills to preserve the world...in order that it should be the place where He can be perceived and accepted and known and confessed by the creature as the living Word of God. (C.D. IV/3, p. 332)

Of His pure grace, He gives men 'time, place and opportunity'<sup>1</sup> for their free action as His witnesses and servants.

A further question must be asked: could there not have been a more precise relationship between Jesus Christ and ourselves?<sup>2</sup> He is not identical with us, but we exist in encounter with Him.<sup>3</sup> He is the hope of all men, and yet some have fruitful encounter with Him, others unfruitful.<sup>4</sup> Some demonstrate their freedom without knowledge of Him, others demonstrate it with Him. 'In the sphere left for us between the commencement and completion of the parousia and

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1. ibid., p. 333.

2. ibid., p. 335.

3. ibid., p. 335.

4. ibid., p. 335.

not yet redeemed is not solved, but it does have a bright side. All our human longing and sighing in this transitional time is not 'to be cast off as quickly as possible'; but is a 'specific form of the greatness of the pitying love of God.'<sup>1</sup>

The bright and luminous side of the riddle of our existence in transition, in the time of the "still" and "not yet", is the fact that Jesus Christ Himself is in transition, living, acting, speaking and working under the same sign, and that this is not even partially to His shame but to His distinctive glory, so that it cannot be to our hurt that He is present in the form of the promise of the Spirit, but to our full salvation. (C.D. IV/3, pp. 361-2)

Barth speaks of this time as the day of Jesus Christ. For us men it points the way to full salvation. (1) 'Our day is a day of His revelation';<sup>2</sup> (2) it is the time in which Jesus Christ actively seeks the lost,<sup>3</sup> converting them from ignorance to knowledge; and (3) during this time Jesus Christ sets the Christian in His service, actively bearing witness in the world.

To know Jesus Christ is...to take the side of Jesus Christ, to become a responsible subject instead of a mere object in His cause, to be prepared not merely to hear His Word, but also to repeat it...  
(C.D. IV/3, p. 366)

He joins Christ's fight against darkness, and in his weakness calls on God who gives him the strength needed to stand at His side.

The purpose and goal of Christ's victory is thus our active participation in it. As Christ Himself is in

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1. ibid., p. 361.

2. ibid., p. 364.

3. ibid., p. 364.



transition, moving through history toward His final revelation, we follow Him and take part in His warfare. Indeed, as Barth dares to say, we are not superfluous to His victory, but, by His grace, necessary to it.<sup>1</sup>

### The Weakness of Barth's Discussion of Jesus the Victor

It is impossible to read Barth's account of Christ in His prophetic office without being aware of its great advance on the usual protestant understanding of Christ in that office. For the purpose of this study, the great advance consists in Barth's picture of Christ as the One who, as the fullness of the being together of God and man, gives man space, time and opportunity fully to live in Him. As Christ moves through history, making Himself known as the One He is, He overcomes man's resistance to Him and so brings man actively to share in His self-attestation in the world.

Barth has, of course, already hinted at this in the two preceding sections of Christology. In the first perspective, Christ the Judge and Priest, he spoke of the verdict of the Father who vindicated Christ as the foundation of the new creation. In raising Christ from the dead, the Father established a way from the old man to the new, a miraculous continuity since it involved the utter death of the old and the completely new beginning of the new. In the second perspective, Christ in His royal office, Barth spoke of the direction or command of the Son. In the resurrection of the Son, there is a transition from Him to us in which we are

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1. ibid., pp. 365-7.

made free to obey Him in love. Our slothful life is set aside and we are set in a new and free existence. In this third perspective, Christ in His Prophetic office, Barth speaks of the promise of the Spirit. Christ makes room for us fully to live in Him. Barth is thinking of the completed work of Christ not only as that which comes forward to us from the past, but also which comes backward, as it were, from the future to us. We taste of the powers of the age to come.<sup>1</sup> If Jesus is the fullness of the being together of God and man, He comes to us in this present in the power of the pledge of the coming consummation of all things in Him. In this perspective Barth stresses the Holy Spirit, since the Spirit is the form of Jesus' coming to us in which we may move toward the coming future glory. In Johannine language, He is the Paraclete whom Jesus sends us in the time of His going away from us, the One who can come to us only if Jesus goes away and is glorified, the One who takes what is His and declares it to us. We are not left orphans because Jesus comes to us in Him, and comes in such a way that it is for our good that He is present in this form.<sup>2</sup> In this form, Jesus leads us into all truth. Thus, under the heading 'The Promise of the Spirit' Barth is able to give scope to man's active service in Jesus' triumphant self-demonstration as the hope of the world.

In the light of this underlying trinitarian structure of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation, it is possible to

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1. Heb. 6: 5.

2. Jn. 16: 7.

see that Barth holds that God's being Father, Son and Holy Spirit opens up for man an active part in the conquering of the world for its redemption in Christ. The Father gives man the basis of his new life in the new creation in His Son; the Son exalts man to freedom as the sons of God; and the Spirit gives men a share in the life of the world to come. In the power of the Spirit the Son 'converts' men from hostile ignorance to obedient knowledge. As He wins this victory, He also makes them soldiers at His side. Through the Spirit, He lives in them and they fight the good fight in His cause. Thus, it is correct to say that the Spirit dwelling in men is the spear-head of the warfare of the triune God. This statement in no way detracts from the basic truth that Jesus is Victor. Rather, it implies that the victory which Jesus is prosecuting through to its conclusion, the victory which the Father has ordained for Him, is prosecuted by Him in the men who are united with Him in His Spirit.

Such is Barth's magnificent vision. But it needs to be deepened.

Jesus is the Victor. But what enemy does He overcome? Barth answers: 'something in man',<sup>1</sup> his ignorance and hostility. It is not the real man,<sup>2</sup> but something in man which cannot bear to be told that it is all up with him and his works. The real man is already in harmony with the Word of God, and therefore Jesus 'overlooks',<sup>3</sup> the resisting element and addresses Himself to the real man. Barth is not denying

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1. C.D. IV/3, p. 251.

2. ibid., p. 270.

3. ibid., p. 270.



that this 'something' is very serious and that it puts man under threat of condemnation. But if there is already an undisturbed alliance between the real man and Christ, where is the battle and therefore where is His victory? Barth seems to make the victory a matter of course, as though it were an integral part of creation, or, at least, of the real man.

It may seem that this criticism takes up merely one point amidst a great deal of writing which indicates Barth's belief in a contest and victory played out in creation, but a similar criticism has to be made of his concept of our certainty of Jesus' victory. As quoted earlier in this chapter, Barth thinks of the light of the Holy Spirit coming like an irresistible flood, breaking down the closed doors of the unbelievers. He makes no mention of an unbeliever 'hardening his heart' and being swept away in judgment. If Barth means his metaphor seriously, and there is no reason to think that he does not, Christ wins His victory despite man. A man's being open or closed to the Holy Spirit means no more than it does in the relationship mentioned above between Christ and the real man. Christ comes to His victory irresistibly and irrespective of the opening or hardening of man.

The triumphant cry: 'Jesus is Victor' originally meant that Jesus is victorious over the demons.<sup>1</sup> On the cross, Jesus defeated the adversary. Barth agrees that this is so:

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1. K. Barth, Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century trans. J. Bowden (S.C.M., London, 1972), p. 644.

in Dogmatics II/2, III/3 and elsewhere he speaks of the defeat of Satan.<sup>1</sup> There is no basis for Wingren's remark that 'there is no devil in Barth's theology.'<sup>2</sup> It is, then, surprising that Barth scarcely mentions the devil in Dogmatics IV/3.

Barth may have been reluctant to speak at any length of the devil and his hosts because of his well known and surely correct observation that to give the devil any space is just what he wants, and nothing so effectively puts him to flight as disbelief in him. But surely it is to give the devil no place to boast of his defeat as Jesus has accomplished it on the cross. It is to give him no more place to take pleasure in Jesus' defeat of him through the work of those who follow Him.

Barth himself says that he has paid sufficient honour to the opponent of the prophecy of Jesus Christ by describing the resisting element in man. In fact:

What has been defined and described in the present context as the resisting element in man is naturally identical with the being which is not systematically or consistently taught in Holy Scripture, but in the New Testament especially is frequently mentioned as the "devil", the principium or principens of darkness...  
(C.D. IV/3, p. 260)

This extraordinary statement does at least have the very great merit of affirming that men do not lose responsibility for what they do and are when subject to the devil. If a man resists the light, it is true that it is both the man

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1. C.D. II/2, pp. 122-3; C.D. III/3, pp. 349ff.

2. G. Wingren, Theology in Conflict, trans. E.H. Wahlstrom (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1958), p. 25.

who is responsible for this evasion of the truth and also that the demonic powers are tempting him to do it. Again, it is true to say that when the resisting element in man is defeated, Satan is also defeated. But to equate the resisting element and the 'devil' overlooks the indispensable doctrine that, in the name of Jesus, men are to resist and to cast out the devil. Barth's equation would make this a less significant doctrine since it would mean only that men, through grace, cast out a resisting element from themselves, and not that they subdue their enemy the adversary.

In his 'brief glance' at the devils (III/3) Barth linked them with das Nichtige, with the chaos which God passed over.<sup>1</sup> Das Nichtige was not chosen and defeated at the creation, as the work of God's left hand. This means that there is no defeat of the devil in the creation, or, more correctly, what defeat of him takes place in creation takes place on the ground of the revelation of his pre-creational defeat. To the extent that das Nichtige and the devil are placed together there is no defeat of man's enemy by man. If Satan were defeated with das Nichtige before creation, all that now remains to be defeated within creation is his lie that God is a deceiver. It must be maintained with Barth that Satan has no power except that of non-being, of the unreality of a lie: if this were not so, we would be faced with dualism. But it is equally true that Satan must be defeated within creation, for it is in creation that he has the target of his attack against God. God could have chosen to defeat Satan simply by His Word of judgment, but in

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1. C.D. III/3, pp. 522-4.



an overflowing of His free grace He determined to defeat him by the man Jesus. In this way He vindicated His grace, and man as the creature of grace, vindicating Himself and man against the accuser.

What must theology say about Jesus' victory over the opponents of grace? If we look steadily at the heart of theology, at the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see a man demonstrate the fatherly purpose of God. We see Jesus choose God simply because God is God, simply for God's sake, and hence choose Him for no personal gain but simply 'for nothing'.<sup>1</sup> We see Him confirming that decision on the cross by giving His whole being into the hand of God who has taken everything from Him, including Himself. In this completion of His decision we see Him imitating God: for just as God in His free grace loves Him 'for nothing' and simply for Himself, so He loves God freely and for God's sake. Thus, in this perfected decision of Jesus, God's grace reaches its fruition: He has a man who is as He is, a man who imitates Him in His being while being other than Him, and therefore He

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1. In the book of Job (1: 9), Satan taunts God that no-one, not even Job, fears God 'for naught'. This must mean that no-one loves God simply without regard to personal safety and reward, fearing, loving and choosing Him simply for Himself. The word used here in the Hebrew is hanan: 'without cause' (cf. Ps. 35: 7; 69: 4). The Psalmist can speak of those who hate him without a cause, i.e., for naught. Very instructive is the fact that when he calls on God for mercy he can also use a word from the same root, e.g., 'Be gracious to me (hanneni)' (Ps. 51: 1): he is pleading with God to be merciful to him without cause (i.e., without cause other than God's own mercy, since there is no reason in himself why God should show him favour). Jesus chooses and loves God simply 'for naught', for God's sake, and thus He corresponds to and imitates in His being the being of God who turns to man 'for nothing'.

has a man who has trusted His grace to that point where He is worthy to be crowned at His side, to be with Him eternally. In the overflow of His fatherly grace He has brought that which is other than Himself freely to turn to Him and to become worthy to share His own being while yet not ceasing to be itself, other than Him. Further: we see Jesus as the author and finisher of the faith of those not Himself. God is so wholly gracious that He purposes men other than Jesus to repeat Jesus' relationship with Him, and thus, through His Spirit, freely to confirm themselves in their election of Him.

In the light and strength of Jesus' perfect turning to God, that which God's grace overcomes is seen falling in defeat. This is the enemy who is the sum of all gracelessness, that which God did not choose (as Barth so correctly says) but which chose itself (as Barth so unfortunately does not say): it is the rebel creature of God, the fallen angel Satan, who refuses to live by grace and confirms himself in this evil decision, thus making himself worthy of the bottomless pit which is the opposite of the Kingdom of heaven. Against Barth, it must be maintained that the devil is created, for only then would it be necessary for God to defeat him by the fullest demonstration of His grace, i.e. by a creature, a man who trusts His grace and thus proves it to be a lie that creatures cannot be as satisfied with not being as God as God is with being God.<sup>1</sup> Against Barth it must also

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1. It is possible to paraphrase the temptation of Genesis 3 by saying that the devil was insinuating that God is not wholly gracious, that it is impossible for those who are not God to be as satisfied with being what they are by grace as God is with being Himself, and that therefore man can be fulfilled only by grasping ungraciously at being 'as God'.

be maintained that the devil has chosen against God, for only then would it be necessary for God to defeat him by the choice of man, i.e., by that perfectly grateful choice which answers to and vindicates God's grace, the choice which vindicates His grace as that which man is pleased to choose 'for nothing', simply because it is God Himself.

As theology looks to Jesus and sees Satan fleeing in defeat, it also becomes clear that he is made, despite himself, to serve God's fatherly purpose. It becomes clear that the Father posits the time between Jesus' first and conclusive though not final defeat of Satan in order that His Son may have the glory of prosecuting His defeat through the service of those who are other than Him and live in His grace, those who stand on His victory and overcome God's enemy and theirs in Jesus' name. For the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ wills wholly to be gracious: He wills the defeat of the accuser of His grace through the men who are the objects of His gracious love: these men, through the Spirit of His beloved Son, are to be the demonstration to both heaven and earth (Eph. 3: 10) of the riches of His grace. These men, as they turn to Him in gratitude and imitation of His turning to them, defeat the accuser who said that the gracious God had no men who loved Him simply for Himself, for nothing. And the very intensity and subtlety of the accuser's temptations only serves to purify the deliberate and simple turning of men to God for His sake.

If this account of the 'eternal purpose of God realised in Jesus Christ' (Eph. 3:11) is substantially correct, the following deepening of Barth's vision can be made. 1. The



God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not Jesus Christ, posits the time of the Church. This is in order that the riches of His grace might be displayed through His sons in the Church. 2. Jesus Christ conquered not only das Nightige and the resistance in man but also the rebel angel Satan in order that men in Him might, standing on His victory, themselves contend against spiritual evil. In this way it is men in the name of Jesus who are the vindication of the Creator and His creation against the accuser. 3. Men in the Church do this, as Barth indicates, in the power of the Holy Spirit, but the decision of men must be emphasised in a way Barth does not. For if the rebel angel who is the sum of all gracelessness was defeated by the decision of Jesus completed on the cross, men must participate in that decision if they are to participate in that defeat: there can be no talk of an already existing alliance between the real man and Jesus. Rather, it must be said that only as men for their own part turn to God in correspondence of His turning to them do they resist the devil. It is through the Spirit that men enter into this victory for themselves, for in the Spirit they both participate in Christ and also make their own free decision.

G.C. Berkouwer has made some observations about the devil in Barth's theology which are similar to those made here.<sup>1</sup> He thinks that Barth demythologises the devil and underestimates the seriousness of the threat which he constitutes

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1. G.C. Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, trans. H.R. Boer (Paternoster, London, 1956), pp. 239ff.

to men and to the Church. If the argument of this chapter is basically sound, Berkouwer's criticisms can be accepted insofar as they indicate a more strenuous warfare with the devil in the time of the Church. But Berkouwer quite overlooks the purpose which this warfare is ordained by the Father to serve.<sup>1</sup> A note of old Calvinist stoicism enters his thought and he quite forgets (what Barth celebrates) that the Church moves forward in joyful victory, rejoicing in the victory of Jesus. Rather than state the shortcoming of Barth in Berkouwer's way, it is better to point to the victory of Jesus over Satan as described in Luke's Gospel. When the seventy returned from their mission, they rejoiced that even the demons were subject in His name. It was in relation to the authority He had given that He said: 'I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven.' (Lk. 10: 18). God accomplished Satan's defeat through His people in Jesus name. The significance of this may be gauged from some aspects of the letter to the Ephesians. There, the goal of the good-pleasure of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is, through and in the beloved Son, not Christ Himself but the Church, His body. The Church is called to be strong in Him and to stand against the wiles of the devil (6: 11),

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1. The dimension of triumph over Satan recedes behind a gloomy sense of man's frailty and Satan's power and the corresponding unremitting battle against him in Berkouwer's Faith and Perseverance, trans. R.D. Knudsen (W.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1958), pp. 157-68. While he is correct to stress the vigilance needed, should he not locate the reason for this not so much in man's (very real) weakness as in the power of the Lord and the devil's consequent fear that man will use that power?

taking offensive action against him in the Spirit (6: 17-20). Christ's victory against the devil does not mean that he has no more power, but that Christ is the place where men may stand (6: 11, 13) securely against him and prosecute a victorious battle against a still dangerous enemy. Through prayer in the Spirit, Paul boldly proclaims the gospel which brings men into Christ and so defeats the devil. Thus, the word proclaimed by men in the Spirit is the spearhead of the victory of Jesus as ordained by the Father. As men exercise this bold decision on earth and in time, the triune God vindicates His gracious purpose both to men and against the evil decision of the 'principalities and powers in the heavenly places'. (3: 10; 6: 12).



## CHAPTER IX

### MAN'S GRACELESS DECISION: SIN

With the long discussion of the one and undivided grace of Jesus Christ now behind us, it is possible to take up the question of what happens in the initial encounter of Christ with the sinner. For Barth, just as there are three dimensions in which the whole Christ displays His riches for man, so there are three dimensions of His claiming the whole man for Himself. In order to do justice to Barth's comprehensive treatment, this study will follow his procedure. First, however, it is necessary to look at his account of man's decision against grace. Once the nature of this decision from which man is to turn has been discussed, the three perspectives of the decision for Christ will be studied. These are, first, the basis of man's new life in justification and faith; second, the act of turning made on that basis in the initial moment of sanctification; and, finally, man's venturing out on that new life in the hope of reaching the goal of his calling. Though this procedure involves a measure of repetition, it is the only way of comprehending the multiform grace of the one grace of Jesus Christ as He encounters the individual. The study will conclude with an examination of Barth's account of the first step of man's new life, his baptism.

Barth undeviatingly affirms that sin can be known for what it is only when men turn from it to God. Sin is the negative refusal of Jesus Christ, and cannot become an

autonomous area of study.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of sin depends at every point on the doctrine of the positive grace of Jesus Christ.

The sinner cannot know his sin because sin means the crookedness and corruption of the whole person.<sup>2</sup> His self-knowledge is corrupt.<sup>3</sup> He cannot judge himself to be a sinner,<sup>4</sup> and it is only when the grace and holiness of Jesus Christ shine on him that he knows who he is.

Unless the knowledge of sin arises from knowledge of Jesus Christ, every attempt to construct a doctrine of man's evil is bound to be merely a form of self-projection and so also of self-justification. Why does Barth hold so drastic a view? Because only as Jesus Christ confronts man does he have concrete, specific knowledge of himself.<sup>5</sup> Jesus Christ is true God, and therefore man's Lord who confronts him as his superior and Judge. Jesus Christ is also true man and confronts man face to face with himself - with concrete humanity and not a concept of humanity. As true God confronting man in Jesus Christ, man's ideals and concepts, by which he had hoped to measure himself, are shown to be abstractions; and as true man confronting men in their

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 139: Barth says that the discussion of sin '...must not be a doctrine of sin which is autonomous, which considers the matter and...presents it in a vacuum, and therefore...abstractly.'

2. ibid., pp. 359-61.

3. Cf. Jer. 17: 9: 'the heart is deceitful above all things.'

4. C.D. IV/1, pp. 360-1. The sinner 'cannot accuse himself [as]...finally and totally guilty.' (p. 360).

5. C.D. IV/2, p. 383.

situation, He exposes man's self-knowledge as abstract, un-specific. As very God and very man, Jesus Christ confronts man inescapably with himself, and He closes in on him so that there is no room for him to create ideals or to invent a concept of himself.

In this concrete knowledge of man, man's wrong is revealed to be something he never imagined it to be: transgression against God's grace. If man's wrong were failure to reach an ideal it might be excuseable; if it were the breaking of the law, it might also be excuseable; but since it is transgression against the perfect grace of God to man, it is wholly inexcuseable.<sup>1</sup> Since sin is this turning from God's grace, it is unreasonable, absurd, chaotic.<sup>2</sup> It has no basis in God, and it turns against man's own good,<sup>3</sup> and so it is groundless, plunging man headlong into the descent into the abyss. It merits only the rejection of God, and renders man liable to eternal damnation.<sup>4</sup> It should be added that Barth holds that man does not lose his humanity as created in the image of God,<sup>5</sup> and that this only serves to indicate the utter self-contradiction and absurdity of sin.

The most extraordinary and powerful aspect of Barth's doctrine is that he holds sin to be that which is already overcome.<sup>6</sup> Because Jesus Christ has already died for the

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1. ibid., pp. 397-403.

2. C.D. IV/1, p. 139.

3. ibid., p. 140: 'Sin is man's denial of himself in the face of the grace of his Creator.'

4. C.D. IV/3, p. 465.

5. C.D. IV/1, pp. 480-1.

6. The man of sin 'was set aside' in the death of Christ (my underlining): C.D. IV/1, p. 358; cf. IV/2, p. 378.



sin of the world, sin can only be that which has been passed over. Man's sin is a kind of impossible survival from the old man which God has done away with. However strange this may sound, it should be remembered that the Epistle to the Hebrews presents a similar doctrine when it says that Christ 'appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.' (Heb. 9: 26). Also, Paul asks: 'How can we who died to sin still live in it?' (Rom. 6: 2).

This understanding of sin opens up the nature of repentance in at least three ways.

1. Barth's doctrine is of the greatest help in encouraging men to turn from sin to righteousness. Where men are said to be sinners because they have broken the law, it can always seem that God's condemnation of them is unjust. It can seem that God has required them to do works beyond their powers and that He condemns them for the slightest deviation, like a severe task-master. But if the law which condemns is in fact grounded in God's love towards man, if God first gives and commands only what he gives, then God's condemnation of disobedience is fully justified. Man is left without excuse.

This understanding of sin reveals it to be a far more terrible weight than can ever be felt by the preaching of the law and its penalties. Unless it is seen that the sinner offends against God's grace, the intolerable character of the offence cannot appear. Barth argues that Anselm's famous account of the intolerable weight of sin in fact underestimates its seriousness. Anselm correctly notes that man is bound to a superior Lord, but he fails to indicate the

character of the relationship.<sup>1</sup> He neglects to show that the superior Lord, God, has first bound Himself to man in perfect grace. Because He has first turned to man, He becomes the basis of man's free and joyful obedience to Him. With His command He also gives the grace to obey.<sup>2</sup> Thus, when man turns from his superior Lord, he turns from grace, and is wholly in disgrace. Man's debt is therefore not a quantity which can be paid back, as can the debt of an inferior servant to a superior Lord. Man's debt is a breach which can be healed only by the free, unconditional pardon of the offended Lord. The only payment which cancels man's debt, his transgression of grace, is superabounding grace: forgiveness.

It would be possible to point to a whole tradition in the history of the Church which, like Anselm, has believed that it was preaching the seriousness of sin while it was giving an all too rational account of it. It is more pertinent to the purpose of this study to point to a prevalent misunderstanding of sin in modern culture. In lands dominated by Calvinist theology, or, more correctly, by the systems of theology derived from Calvin, it is commonly believed that Christianity teaches that God requires obedience to Himself before He will be gracious to men. He punishes the slightest deviation from His law with eternal damnation. It is forgotten that God first surrounds man with His goodness, and that His commands are gracious. Because this is forgotten,

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1. ibid., pp. 484-91. This entire passage abounds in references to Cur Deus Homo.

2. ibid., p. 488.

God appears to be tyrannical, One who loves only when He sees reason to love. Rebellion becomes not only excuseable but almost morally necessary. It would be possible to quote poem after poem, novel after novel, in which this theme is prominent. So long as the Church clings to a theology in which God is gracious only on condition of man's worthiness, it is futile for the Church to protest against this praise of rebellion in modern literature. Men will be convinced of the seriousness of their sin, and see its inexcuseableness, only when they see that from the beginning they have been rebelling against God's grace. Only then will they turn from their dead works to the forgiveness of the living God.

2. It has been noted in this study that modern culture is afraid that God 'transgresses' into man's domain. Barth's doctrine of sin indicates that exactly the opposite is the case. Man accuses God of his own sin! Since God is entirely gracious, and both gives man a place of his own and helps him in it, when man turns away from God and tries to set himself up, he enters a sphere not his own and so becomes a transgressor and a usurper. He is an intruder.<sup>1</sup> The grace of God in Jesus Christ directs man's accusation of God back to himself. As God apprehends the transgressor, He does not pay back evil with evil, but abounds in grace, forgiving him and restoring him to fellowship with Himself.

3. Since man's sin is already forgiven, sin has the character of repeating sins already forgiven.<sup>2</sup> The significance

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1. ibid., p. 139.

2. C.D. II/2, p. 450: 'God forgives [the rejected man] his sins; but he repeats them as though they were not forgiven.'



of this point may be expressed by pointing out that nothing so strikes at the root of man's pride as the knowledge that he is forgiven. To be told that he is forgiven is to be told that his sin is so serious that he can do nothing about it; he can only accept the forgiveness of the God he has offended. But this is too shameful, and therefore he sets out to justify himself, and in doing so repeats the root of all sin - self-justification.<sup>1</sup> Barth has not mitigated the seriousness of sin: he has put his finger on its utterly stupid and abysmal nature. The 'already' particularly shows man's sin, since it indicates that not even his repentance can bring him freedom from sin. He is forgiven before he repents.

It is now time to turn to some of the details of Barth's doctrine of sin as found in Dogmatics IV. He gives a remarkably rich and complete account of man as the man of sin, but only those aspects will be discussed here which bear on men's 'freedom' to turn from sin to God.

1. Sin cannot alter God's grace toward man.<sup>2</sup> As was shown in Chapter II, Barth holds that God determined Himself for man before the creation of the world. Sin did not take Him by surprise, and from eternity He pledged Himself to give Himself to save man. Further, Christ gave Himself for sinners, and it is therefore certain that it is precisely

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 490: 'It is the sinister aspect of all religious history that in it men are caught in the act of committing again the very sin from which they are trying to free themselves.' Cf. K. Barth, Gospel and Law, trans. J.S. McNab, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, No. 8 (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1959), pp. 16f.

2. C.D. IV/1, pp. 482-4.

sinner who are the objects of His love.

Sin does not, however, cease to be intolerable. On the contrary, just because the sinner cannot alter God's love toward him, his condition is intolerable.<sup>1</sup> The love of God flames out as His consuming anger. 'It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'<sup>2</sup> Barth makes the perceptive comment that Ritschl's refusal to concede any objective reality to the wrath of God makes God unable to love.<sup>3</sup>

2. Nor can sin alter man's being created in the image of God. Man cannot destroy his nature as created by God, and hence Barth cannot agree with the reformation statements about man losing the image of God. His reason for claiming this is that:

Man has not fallen lower than the depth to which God humbled Himself for him in Jesus Christ. But God in Jesus Christ did not become a devil or nothingness. His Word became flesh, participating in our corrupted being. But corruption does not mean the changing of man into another being, like the transformation of the fairy-tale prince into an evil and horrible beast. If this were the case the atonement would be pointless. Even the lost sheep remains in the sphere of the shepherd who seeks, even the lost coin in that of the woman who seeks, even the lost son feeding with the swine in the same world as the distant house of his father. (C.D. IV/1, p. 481)

Sin does not, however, fail to have the most dreadful consequences. Because man remains inalienably man, it means

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1. 'Man still belongs to God, but this means that in resisting God he is hurt as only God can hurt him....The grace of God is still turned to man, but this now means that it is non-grace, wrath and judgment to the one who despises and hates it....' *ibid.*, p. 483.
  2. Heb. 10: 31; cf. Heb. 12: 29.
  3. C.D. II/1, p. 366.

the total corruption and perversion of his created nature.

He is man, but he is dead. The above quotation continues:

Fallen man is dead. But for the miracle of his awakening from the dead, which he needs, and in which his reconciliation with God consists, it is necessary that he should still be there as a corpse, a human corpse. (C.D. IV/1, p. 481).

3. Sin means that man is radically disqualified from saving himself. He has offended the love of God for him, and therefore it is only God who can restore him to favour. He has corrupted his good nature, and therefore he is powerless to restore himself.

One of the most sobering passages of Barth's doctrine of sin is his account of the sinner's inability not to sin. The sinner is able only to sin. The bondage of the will is not to be conceived as did Luther, deterministically and non-Christologically. It consists in refusing the freedom Christ has for him.

Of the free man it has to be said: non potest peccare. His freedom excludes this. It excludes the possibility of sinning. He "cannot" sin in the capacity granted him by God....He can sin only as he renounces this capacity and therefore...makes no use of his freedom....It does not rest on anything which can seriously be called a posse. It has no basis either in God or in man by which it can be explained. It can only be described as a freedom not to be free, which is nonsense....It is the grasping of the possibility which is no possibility, but which can only be characterised as an impossibility. It is the "choosing" which is not an alternative to the genuine choosing of faith and obedience and gratitude but only the dreadful negation of this genuine choosing. It is the irrational and incomprehensible decision of man. It is a fact only as peccare, hamartanein, transgression. Yet in this character it is a real fact. It is a sinister fact which is not illuminated by any posse. It is the fact of sin in which man reveals and demonstrates that he is inexplicably the slothful man who does not make any use of his freedom. He can have his freedom only as he uses it, in the choice of the possibility which corresponds to it. If he does not use it, he goes out into the absolute void of a being in unbelief and disobedience and ingratitude, into a being



which is no true being. And this means that he looses it. He does not have it. There is no freedom in this unreal being and for those who turn to it. It is eo ipso the sphere of bondage. As a sinner man has decided against his freedom to be genuinely man. And in this decision he will necessarily continue to decide against it. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (Jn. 8: 34). In this briefest of biblical formulations we have the whole doctrine of the bondage of the will. Non potest non peccare is what we have to say of the sinful, slothful man. (C.D. IV/2, p. 495)

This passage has been quoted at some length because it uses the doctrines of the ontological impossibility of sin and of man's freedom only for obedience, doctrines which will be questioned later in this chapter. For the present purpose it is clear that Barth holds sin to be a decision and turning of man from whose consequences he cannot possibly extricate himself. In the Dogmatics Barth has moved toward the classical catholic understanding of sin as the perversion and corruption of man's nature as created good by God.<sup>1</sup> This is a gain for the protestant understanding of sin, at least insofar as protestant doctrines made it seem that in sin man lost his will and thus made it very difficult to see how man could be responsible for his works. It is appropriate in this connection to underline Barth's insistence that man is responsible for his sin. His correction of the notion of 'original sin' is particularly helpful. Many conceptions of 'original sin' mitigate man's actual responsibility for his sin, e.g., the well-known account in the Westminster Confession:

[Our first parents] being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin [of eating the forbidden fruit]

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1. Cf. H.Ü. von Balthasar, The Theology of Karl Barth, trans. J. Drury (Anchor Books, New York, 1972), pp. 133f.

was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption...do proceed all actual transgressions. (VI, 3-4)

Barth observes that original sin was early in the Church's history regarded as 'hereditary sin', being passed on by propagation.<sup>1</sup> This view probably arose through a combination of a misreading of Romans 5: 12 (which was taken to mean that all men sinned in Adam) with Psalm 51: 5 ('in sin did my mother conceive me.'). Barth asks: 'how can propagation be simply a vehicle by which the sin of an earlier man becomes that of a later?'<sup>2</sup> Barth answers that there 'can be no objection to the Latin expression peccatum originale' so long as it is not defined in terms of propagation and that

it is indeed quite adequate, telling us that we are dealing with the original and radical and therefore the comprehensive and total act of man, with the imprisonment of his existence in that circle of evil being and evil activity....It is...his peccatum, the act in which he makes himself a prisoner and therefore has to be a prisoner. This is the point which is obscured by the term hereditary sin (Erbsunde). What I do as the one who receives an inheritance is something that I cannot refuse to do, since I am not asked concerning my willingness to accept it. It is only in a very loose sense that it can be regarded as my own act. It is my fate which I may acknowledge but for which I cannot acknowledge or regard myself responsible. And yet it is supposed to be my determination for evil...and I myself am supposed to be an evil tree merely because I am the heir of Adam. (C.D. IV/1, p. 500)

In view of this, Barth suggests that the term Erbsunde be replaced by a more strict translation of peccatum originale, Ursunde.

What is meant is the voluntary and responsible life of every man...which by virtue of the judicial sentence

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 500.

2. ibid., p. 500.

passed on it and with his reconciliation with God is the sin of every man, the corruption which he brings upon himself so that as the one who does so... he is necessarily and inevitably corrupt.  
(C.D. IV/1, p. 501)

One further point needs to be noted in this connection. In Barth's account of man's responsibility for his sin, and of his utter inability to save himself, man's being and man's act are bound together. Man's being is utterly perverse and his acts are utterly unfree, utterly sinful. Further, man's sinful acts follow of necessity from his perverted being. Man is a sinner, and therefore does sinful deeds. Barth does not separate man's act from his being. This point anticipates a problem to be raised in connection with man's salvation: does Barth separate man's act from his being when he argues that men are saved in their being before they actively participate in their salvation?

4. If sin is the total corruption of man in both being and act, and yet if it cannot alter either God's relentless love for man, or man's being created in the image of God, we shall not be surprised to find that God sets limits to man's fearful situation. The question immediately arises as to whether Barth succeeds in defining these limits without compromising man's responsibility.

The primary limit set to man's sin has already been discussed in Chapters II and III, i.e., man's election in which Christ has borne man's rejection. Jesus Christ is the one rejected man, and because He has experienced this rejection to the full, rejection can never again be the lot of any other man. It was argued in Chapter III, however, that Christ bore man's sin in such a way that man escapes



rejection only if he participates in Christ by faith.<sup>1</sup> It was further argued in Chapter V that Christ said the Amen to the divine condemnation of sin, and that man can be saved only as he participates in Christ's response to the Father. None of these modifications of Barth intends to question his thesis concerning the perfection and complete adequacy of Christ's work. Rather, these modifications are intended to strengthen it, and to insist that all that Christ has He has for us in such a complete way that we are His only when we share actively in Him. The point at issue concerns Christ's self-communication in the Holy Spirit. Does Christ include men in Himself and save them in their being apart from their baptism in the Spirit? Or is the Spirit equal God with Christ with the consequence that Christ's salvation saves man's being only as they are recreated by the Spirit?

In Volume IV of the Dogmatics the chief limitation set to man's sin is again ontological. Sin was not created by God and does not belong 'to the constitution of the world as He willed it.'<sup>2</sup> It can be active and present in the world only as an 'alien', as an 'usurpation against the creative will of God.' It is entirely negative, and 'even where God uses it in His service...it can serve only to fulfil His judgment...'<sup>3</sup> Sin has no place and it is effectively negated by God in Christ. The extent to which sin has been overcome

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1. Chapter III, pp. 161-2.

2. C.D. IV/1, p. 139.

3. ibid., p. 140.

according to Barth can be seen in his discussion of the Christ-Adam parallel. He takes up Paul's comprehensive statement: 'For God has consigned all men disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.' (Rom. 11: 32). This refers to two great 'unities': the concluding of all men under sin, which belongs to man's past since it is overcome in the death of Christ, and the future of man under God's mercy.<sup>1</sup> Sin has been overcome, passed over in Christ's cross. This is the sin of all men as it is played out in world history.<sup>2</sup> For the Bible this history is indicated by the name Adam. Who is Adam? The man who sinned from the beginning.<sup>3</sup> And who are his successors? According to the Bible they are his physical descendants, but it must be asked how they become like Adam in his act of transgression.

If by the word sin, whether it is Adam's sin or our own, we have always to think of a human decision and act,...then the answer to this question can only be that the successors of Adam are...those who are represented in his person and deed.

(C.D. IV/1, p. 510)

'Adam is the truth concerning man as it is known to God and told to us.'<sup>4</sup> It is thus God who establishes the relationship between Adam and us. It is the Word of God which 'fuses all men into unity with' Adam.<sup>5</sup> But to what extent is it true that all men are condemned in Adam? Barth answers with a brief consideration of Romans 5: 12-21. Adam for Paul is

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1. ibid., pp. 501-3.

2. ibid., pp. 505-6.

3. ibid., pp. 509-10.

4. ibid., p. 511.

5. ibid., p. 511.

obviously the figure of Genesis 3, but Genesis 3 became decisive for him because in Adam he recognised another but quite different figure: Christ, the Representative, bearing the sin of the world.<sup>1</sup> Christ is so far superior to Adam that we cannot speak of Christ being compared with Adam, but only of Adam as he appears 'like the rainbow in relation to the sun.'<sup>2</sup> Adam's offence is as nothing compared with the free gift which comes in the righteousness of Christ.

It is in relation to the last Adam that this first Adam...has for Paul existence and consistence, and that in what is said of him he hears what is true and necessarily true of himself....It is beyond the threehold which Jesus Christ has crossed, and every man in Him, that he hears in Him the sentence on himself and all men as a Word of God and not of man - a sentence against which there can be no appeal passed on the man of sin, who was every man, but who no longer exists now that God has had mercy on all with the same universality with which He once concluded all in disobedience. (C.D. IV/1, p. 513)

This extraordinary thesis, which is argued even more powerfully in his pamphlet Christ and Adam, leaves no doubt that for Barth Adam and his sin have been passed over and 'no longer exist.'

Corresponding to this ontological limitation of sin, and based on it, Barth also speaks of the limit set to man's sinful acts. '[The bondage of the will] has its limit in the mercy of God, or concretely in the liberation accomplished for man in Jesus.'<sup>3</sup> Man has been converted and been born again in Him. The flesh has already been passed over because

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1. ibid., p. 512.

2. ibid., p. 513.

3. C.D. IV/2, p. 496.



the Spirit has come.

A third limit to sin is set eschatologically. The sinner is not yet sentenced to eternal damnation, he is only under threat of it.<sup>1</sup> He cannot change the truth of God, however much he may suppress it and hold it in uprightness. Although God does not owe man 'eternal patience',<sup>2</sup> there is no reason why theology should not be open to the possibility of the final deliverance of all men. It is a matter of God's freedom as to how He will finally exercise His judgment and mercy, and theology can prescribe nothing for Him beforehand.

Before setting out to answer the question about the limits to man's responsibility, it will be useful to make a number of assessments of Barth's understanding of sin.

#### Assessment of Barth's doctrine of sin

Barth's fundamental thesis about sin is astounding but surely Biblical. If the centre of Barth's doctrine of sin has been correctly described as the offence against the grace of God which has already been overcome by the superabundance of that grace, Barth is following Paul closely: 'where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (hupereperisseusen hē charis)' (Rom. 5: 20). Indeed, it could be said that the main argument of Romans 5 and 6 is that God's grace in Christ has abounded so fully that sin has been crucified and that it is an absurdity to continue to live in it.

There are, however, certain difficulties with Barth's interpretation of his thesis. It must be asked whether, in

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1. C.D. IV/3, pp. 465, 473-8.

2. ibid., p. 477.

order that God's grace may reach its goal of man's proven freedom for Himself, there is a possibility of and temptation to sin in a sense Barth does not allow, and whether what may be called the ontological impossibility of sin was not achieved by the decision of Jesus against Satan's graceless temptation.

It is notorious that Barth speaks of evil as das Nichtige, the impossible possibility, and even an ontological impossibility.<sup>1</sup> He further constantly maintains that man has no freedom for evil, that he is not free to choose between good and evil and that he is free for good only. By these provocative terms and ideas Barth does not mean to deny the existence and reality of evil. Rather, he wishes to present as strongly as he sees Holy Scripture telling us the fact that evil has no right of existence, that it was not willed or posited by God and that on the contrary it is negated by God so that it exists only as nothingness, only as that which has been rejected and passed over. There is no concession to the Platonic and neo-Platonic conception of evil as non-being in the sense of what is unreal. Barth intends to underline the seriousness of evil, its impossibility as that not willed by God and the fact that

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1. Barth has created this word in order to refer to that which exists only as that 'which has been brought to naught.' See H. Hartwell, The Theology of Karl Barth (Lutterworth, London, 1964), p. 117. G. Wingren strongly opposes this concept of evil, Theology in Conflict, trans. E.H. Wahlstrom (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1958), p. 109. The root of Barth's conception of the impossibility of evil is to be found in his doctrine of God, e.g. C.D. II/1, p. 532, where he argues that God in His concrete freedom is the criterion of all genuine possibilities. Cf. 'The Gift of Freedom', trans. T. Weiser in The Humanity of God (Collins, London, 1961), pp. 71f.

it exists only as absurdity and self-contradiction. So serious is evil, so radically does God not will it that Barth does not like the expression often used by theologians= that God permitted evil -- for Barth that sounds too much like conceding to evil a place in His plan of redemption and therefore at least the possibility of some good in evil. Evil is of course made to serve the good, but that is its punishment and it is compelled to do it against its will.<sup>1</sup>

Barth explains the meaning of his terms in this way.

By das Nichtige:

I mean that it exists only in the negativity proper to it in its relationship to God and decisively in God's relationship of repudiation to it. It does not exist as God does, nor as His creatures, amongst which it is not to be numbered. It has no basis for its being. (C.D. IV/3, p. 178)

Of 'impossible possibility' he says that:

If it is a paradox, it is used in the sphere to which paradox properly belongs. What it denotes is the absurd possibility of the absurd. Since evil has and is reality in its fatal manner, we have to reckon with its possibility, with its power to be real. What kind of power is this? Can it be described as any other than the power of impotence and therefore as the possibility of the impossible? Evil exists only per nefas, in the fact of a revolt which has no positive basis, which can have its ratio only in the abyss, which as such can be no more than the product of unreason. It lacks any justifying raison d'etre. (C.D. IV/3, p. 178)

Though he says that he 'has no great affection' for the term 'ontological impossibility' he does not see that it is 'wholly inappropriate'.

What it means is that the nature of evil as the negation negated by God disqualifies its being, and therefore its undeniable existence, as impossible, meaningless, illegitimate, valueless and without foundation. (C.D. IV/3, p. 178)

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 140.



Barth's understanding of man's freedom follows from God's utter rejection of all evil. God wills only good for His creature. He has not therefore given man a 'freedom' to choose between good and evil. He does not give man such an ambiguous gift, nor does he posit man at a neutral point suspended between good and evil. In His fatherly care He has made man free for freedom only: in no sense is man free for unfreedom.

In order fully to understand Barth's conception of man's freedom, it must be seen that man's freedom is grounded in God's freedom. It is a reflection of the divine freedom. It is a kind of 'silhouette of the elective, free and total activity of God Himself to whom he makes a human response.'<sup>1</sup> That this is so is a measure of the boundless love of God. God in His grace wishes to have man as His partner, as the object of His love. He turns to man with no ulterior motive, with no other purpose than to display His love and to choose man for Himself. But His love will be fulfilled only if man chooses Him for no ulterior motive and only because of God Himself. In the language of Job, He desires man to love Him for naught, to love Him simply because He is God.<sup>2</sup> This is the 'fellowship' which is to exist between man and God, the freedom of man responding and corresponding to the freedom of God. Man's freedom exists and is used only when man freely turns to God in loving reflection of His turning to him. He has no freedom to turn away from God.

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 104.

2. C.D. IV/3, p. 387.

If, in the next few pages, it is found necessary to modify Barth's account of man's freedom, it will only be for the purpose of strengthening this glorious conception of man's freedom, as rooted in God's free turning to man.

Barth holds that man has no freedom to sin. How, then, does he understand the archetypal sin of Adam? Does not the very existence of a forbidden possibility imply, at least in some sense, the freedom to sin? Barth argues that God, in His fatherly wisdom, did not want man as the merely passive object of His grace, but as the active subject who confirms His grace. Therefore God (a) planted not only the tree of life but also the tree of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. It was God<sup>1</sup> who posited this reality and therefore also the possibility that man could partake of it. His purpose was wholly good, since He desired that man should freely choose to allow Him to be the judge of good and evil.<sup>2</sup> By planting this tree, He made it possible that man should put behind him the evil possibility of making himself the judge, and so that man should freely follow His judgment of good and evil.<sup>3</sup> God (b) not only planted this tree, He also pointed it out to man.<sup>4</sup> He did this so that man's obedience would be informed and deliberate. Further, He (c) neither made man's confirmation of His decision physically necessary, nor his disobedience physically impossible.<sup>5</sup> Man's decision would

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1. C.D. III/1, p. 263.

2. ibid., p. 264.

3. God willed that man should acknowledge His office as Judge, and confirm God's decision in his own decision (ibid., pp. 264-5).

4. ibid., p. 263.

5. ibid., p. 263.

be a matter of freedom and not of necessity. Thus, man is free only to obey God, but, for the sake of that freedom, it is not impossible for man to refuse Him. The negative possibility exists only for the sake of the freedom of the positive actuality of obedience.

Barth's account of the temptation to sin is not so perceptive as this account of the possibility of sin. In the previous chapter it was argued that Barth is mistaken to deny that the tempter is a fallen angel, and that he thereby misses the full significance of Jesus' defeat of him. It was argued that God is so entirely gracious that He has staked the vindication of His glory and His grace on His creatures. The tempter is the fallen spiritual creature who desires to vindicate his rebellion by seducing earthly creatures into believing that grace is not sufficient for their fulfillment and that they must become 'as God'. God could, of course, have destroyed the devil merely by uttering His Word of judgment, but in His mercy He chose to vindicate His grace through the man Jesus. Jesus was the perfect Job. He was perfectly obedient to the Word of grace, choosing and loving and trusting God in the midst of the most severe temptation. He thereby feared God 'for naught', and proved that earthly creatures are wholly satisfied with God's grace. This free trust in God's grace gave God the answer to Satan which He desired: His grace was proven to be adequate for the creature's fulfillment, and He had a creature who loved Him solely for Himself.

Barth does not give sufficient weight to the fact that it was by man's obedience that God vindicated His grace. He



undervalues the doctrine that man's free obedience defeats Satan and vindicates His grace - simply because God's grace is satisfied when that which is not God is wholly satisfied with that grace. Barth has quite properly argued that evil can be defeated only if God meets it and overcomes it.<sup>1</sup> Further as H. Hartwell has said, for Barth God overcomes evil at the cross.<sup>2</sup> Barth says:

nothingness is to be known only at the heart of the Gospel, i.e., in Jesus Christ. In the incarnation God exposed Himself to nothingness even as this enemy and assailant. He did so in order to repel and defeat it. (C.D. III/3, p. 311)

What does this mean for the temptation to which man is exposed? It has been noted that for Barth God (a) planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and therewith posited the possibility of disobedience, (b) pointed it out to man and (c) did not make it impossible for man to disobey. God did this in order that His free decision for man might have its correspondence in the free decision of man. But what is the point of God's not only positing the forbidden possibility but also exposing man to temptation? For Barth, since he holds this temptation to be only that of das Nichtige, it serves only to indicate that man can be preserved in being only by the superior power of God's grace. Because he does not allow that this temptation comes from the spiritual creature who has decided against grace, he cannot say that God (a) assigned a specific purpose to this temptation,

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1. C.D. III/3, pp. 354-60. 'The controversy with nothingness, its conquest removal and abolition, are primarily and properly God's own affair.' ibid., p. 354.

2. Cf. H. Hartwell, op.cit., p. 122.

(b) entrusted its defeat to His earthly creature, man, and that He (c) did not make it impossible for man not to succeed - in order that man, as the creature of His grace, might prove by his deliberate decision against gracelessness and for grace that God's gracious decision is sufficient for him. For man to decide against the temptation of das Nichtige would mean no special vindication of God's grace since it would not involve, by grace, the decision against the possibility realised by Satan of deciding against grace. The effect of this shortcoming in Barth is that he cannot say of the temptation to evil what he can of the planting of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, i.e., that God gives it its place in order that His grace may reach its goal in man's free decision for Himself. The tree and the temptation to evil are, of course, antithetical in that God planted the one and rejected the other, but the tree could not have served its purpose in bringing men freely to obey God's election unless the temptation to decide against grace had come in the form of the devil who had already chosen against it. Barth robs temptation of the purpose which, despite itself, God's grace makes it serve, i.e., to prove and perfect man's obedient election of God's gracious election of him, to prove man's freedom.

In the light of these observations, two modifications of Barth's understanding of man and his sin must be made.

1. It is confusing to speak of an ontological impossibility of sin. Granted that sin is an ontological self-contradiction, given no right of being by God and utterly forbidden by Him, and in this sense 'impossible', it

must still be maintained that unless sin is a possibility, and a possibility which man must reject (albeit on the grounds of God's superior rejection), it makes no sense to talk of man freely choosing and affirming God's decision of grace. Unless man has been created in such a way that he is not secured against evil by virtue of his creation, it is meaningless to speak of man's proving the adequacy of grace for his created being.

2. Granted that man is not Hercules at the cross-roads, that God has not put man on trial<sup>1</sup> and has not set before him good and evil, it must still be maintained that it is not impossible for man to refuse grace and that in this sense man is free to sin. Unless this is so it is meaningless to speak of God's grace finding its goal in the free decision of man. It may be helpful at this point to make explicit two meanings of the word freedom. The first is the meaning which Barth constantly has in mind and is the use found in Holy Scripture: 'if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed';<sup>2</sup> 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom';<sup>3</sup> 'for freedom Christ has set us free'.<sup>4</sup> There is no passage in the New Testament which even remotely suggests that man has any freedom apart from Christ. But there is a second meaning of freedom which may perhaps best be described absence of necessity. For example, no man is compelled to choose Christ. In this sense, he is free to choose or to reject Christ. It

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1. C.D. III/1, p. 264. We 'must...abandon the idea that God put man on trial'. Barth points out that a test is an act of justified suspicion, and that there is no place for this in Eden.

2. Jn. 8: 36.

3. 2 Cor. 3: 17.

4. Gal. 5: 1.



It is true that the two decisions are quite unequal and that one is a free decision in the first meaning of the word and the other is an absurd decision. Nevertheless, unless we can meaningfully speak of freedom in this second sense, we cannot meaningfully speak of free love and obedience of God. This second meaning of freedom exists only because God has first chosen us, but, precisely because He has turned to us and chosen us, we are called to make the free and unconstrained decision for Him.

Hans Küng makes a similar distinction between two understandings of freedom. After reviewing the history of the use of the concept of freedom in catholic tradition he says:

On the basis of this biblically grounded Catholic tradition we propose to make a terminological distinction between "the capacity to choose" ("ability to choose" - arbitrium; adj. "capable of choice," "capable of decision," etc.) and "freedom" (libertas; adj. "free"). (Justification, p. 175)

To speak of 'the capacity to choose' comes too close to the notion Barth surely correctly rejects of the sinner choosing between sin and not sinning. It seems to imply that the two choices are of equal possibility. For this reason it seems to be better to speak not of freedom of choice but of the unconstrained freedom to choose what God has already chosen. However, provided that it is clearly understood that man confirms God's prior election, there seems to be no objection to using Küng's distinction.

These two modifications of Barth relate to the being of man and to his act. In the first it was said that man's being is not secured against sin by virtue of his creation. In the second it was similarly maintained that man is not

secured against the act of sin by virtue of being the object of His love. If these two points are combined it emerges that man is responsible to God for himself in a more comprehensive sense than Barth allows.

This may best be expressed in the following manner. God in His grace wills that man as an active subject confirm the grace given to Him. In order that this confirmation may be genuine it is necessary that his obedience be in no way constrained. To mention Job again, in order that Satan's accusation, that man does not fear God 'for naught', may be refuted, man must choose God freely, for His sake alone. For this reason God holds man to the consequences of his decision. It is not that God could not perhaps will to suspend the effects of man's decision, but that in His mercy He will not. As it is said in the Psalms and echoed in many other places: 'God is merciful, therefore he requites a man according to his work.' (Ps. 62: 12; cf. Rev. 22: 12). It is because man is constituted by grace that he cannot avoid the fruits of his actions. He is responsible to the divine Word and, therefore, he is responsible for what he makes of himself. God is so gracious that He does not deprive man of the dignity of making himself the person he chooses to be. If he sows according to the Spirit he reaps a rich harvest in the Spirit; if he sows according to the flesh he reaps according to the flesh.

If God's freedom for man means that we cannot speak of an ontological impossibility of sin and that we must speak of a certain non-impossibility of sin which exists for the sake of man's freedom and thus that we must speak of man's

uninterrupted responsibility for this freedom, it is necessary to ask: what has man made of himself, what has he done with his being, act and responsibility? What are man's works which, because God is merciful, He has promised to requite (Ps. 62: 12)? In the following pages it will be argued that it is necessary to develop Barth's conception of what was achieved in the humanity of Christ to the point where it is seen that, by God's mercy, He has so exercised man's freedom in the face of very real temptation to capitulate to the graceless decision of the devil that He has achieved the ontological impossibility of sin which was God's purpose for man in exposing him to temptation and which gives Him a genuine share in God's own impossibility of sin. In His mercy, God requites Jesus for His good work by crowning Him at His side. It will be urged that, if the self-giving of the gracious God in the Spirit is developed in the manner suggested in this study, it becomes clear that there is a self-giving of man in Christ through that Spirit which fulfils the covenant and in this sense the law, and in so doing gives ontological completion to the creation through man's responsible acts. In other words, on the grounds of a strengthened doctrine of God's gracious self-giving, it will be argued that we must think, even more radically than does Barth, of the historical realisation of His grace, of the historical completion of creation through man's responsibility.

Barth has never deviated from the belief that the grace of God is single and undivided. It is the giving of God Himself. Thus, he resists the idea that there is first



law and then gospel; first a covenant of works and then a covenant of grace; first works and then faith.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, there is the one eternal covenant of grace, broken by man but fulfilled in time by Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Sin has always been offence against grace. Even Old Testament law should be understood in this way, since the inner meaning of the law is grace, love and the gospel.

Some writers, e.g., G. Wingren<sup>3</sup> and G.C. Berkouwer,<sup>4</sup> think that this leads Barth into an unhistorical conception of God's dealings with men. They see no place in Barth for the historical events in which God realised His will for men, no place for a development toward the fulness of God's grace in this present time. It seems to them that Barth comes perilously close to holding that everything has been realised in eternity and in heaven and that it needs no earthly enactment. This, however, is a serious misinterpretation, since for Barth the eternal covenant was realised in the historical obedience unto death of Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the broken covenant. The event of the cross did not merely reveal eternal truth: it fulfilled it in the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Yet, for all the clarity of Barth's affirmation here,

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1. see, e.g., K. Barth, Gospel and Law, trans. J.S. McNab, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers No. 8 (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1959).
  2. This is argued at length in the introduction to the doctrine of reconciliation, C.D. IV/1, pp. 3-154.
  3. G. Wingren, op.cit., pp. 115ff.
  4. G.C. Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth, trans. H.R. Boer (Paternoster, London, 1956), pp. 250-61.

he does not allow his thesis to come to its full statement. In Chapter III of this study it was suggested that he does not fully allow the priority of the Father in electing to reach its goal in the human electing by men of God as they participate by the Spirit in His Son. It was further argued in Chapters V and VII that he undervalues the involvement of the triune God in the self-humbling of the Son and of the Spirit in the perfection of Jesus. In Chapter VIII it was also argued that he does not fully allow the victory of Jesus on the cross to be such that it opens the way for other men to fight Satan victoriously in His name: he does not fully allow the Church to be the historical goal of the grace realised historically in the decision of Jesus perfected on the cross.

These questions focus on Barth's understanding of the Spirit. The whole grace of God aims at man. God gave Himself in Jesus Christ for man's salvation. God now comes to man in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. But does Barth allow the Spirit to be the fulfillment of the grace of God, does he allow the Spirit to be the self-giving of God as seriously as Christ is the self-giving of God?<sup>1</sup> If the Spirit is given on the ground of the once-for-all self-giving of God in the Son, should not the self-giving of God in the Spirit (who is equal God with the Son) have the same ultimate seriousness as God's

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1. This question may be put by asking whether Barth is able to affirm as clearly as Eastern theology that 'in a certain sense the work of Christ was a preparation for that of the Holy Spirit: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what will I, if it is already kindled?" (Luke xii, 49). Pentecost is thus the object, the final goal of the divine economy upon earth.' V. Lossky, Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (James Clarke, London, 1957), p. 159.

self-giving in the Son? Further, if questions are raised as to the self-giving of God in the Spirit, questions must also be asked as to Barth's understanding of man's self-giving in the Spirit.

These remarks are rather cryptic, and so it will now be helpful to elucidate them in relation to two areas of doctrine: first, that of God's self-giving, and, second, that of man's self-giving on the basis of God's self-giving.

First, what is the meaning of the grace of God, the grace in which God gives Himself wholly for us sinners? Barth answers that God gave Himself to the uttermost in Jesus Christ. He Himself suffered the death which necessarily falls on man's sin, and He Himself is man's new life, man's resurrection from the dead. Barth does not fail to give this its trinitarian context: the Father gave His Son and God now comes to man as the Spirit of His Son. But does Barth allow God to give Himself fully to sinners? Is Barth's concept of God the Spirit adequate? In Chapter VII it was argued that Barth almost entirely overlooks the work of the Spirit in the self-offering of Christ. If this is so, it follows that the Spirit cannot be the Spirit of man's recreation, at least in the full sense in which we find Him in the New Testament. For if the Spirit, who is the Creator Spirit in whom God created the world, did not Himself descend to the depths, to the shaking of the very foundations of the world, and descend in union with the Word by whom the world was created, how can He be the creative power of God in whom sinners are recreated into saints? This is not an idle question, since Barth locates the recreation of sinners in the



death and resurrection of Christ and not in the coming of the Spirit. There is, of course, a very important sense in which Barth is correct: the conversion of the human condition took place in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. But Barth is on questionable ground in allowing only a revelatory work to the Spirit. Barth understands that revelatory work in a dynamic sense and even accords it the status of the new birth and the new creation. Christ's work is perfect and all that remains to be done is the revelation of it: it is a revelation which awakens a man from death to life, for the revealing work of the Spirit claims the whole man for Christ. But surely the Spirit's work as He proceeds from the death and resurrection of Christ is that of baptising men into the perfect reality of Christ: He reveals the ontological conversion of the world in Christ, and brings men to share in it. If this is not basically correct, the self-giving of God in the Spirit is less complete than the self-giving in Christ, since the Spirit accomplishes no ontological work. Against Barth, it must therefore be said that, since the Spirit is equal God with Christ, He recreates the sinner, bringing about an ontological change in him. In Biblical language, this is expressed in the sayings about being born from above of the Spirit and about being adopted as sons of God by the Spirit.<sup>1</sup> The early Church spoke of the dwelling of the Trinity in man, the dwelling of God Himself in man through the Spirit.<sup>2</sup> It is only with the coming of the Spirit that

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1. Jn. 1: 13; 3: 3, 5, 8; Gal. 4: 6.

2. Cf. V. Lossky, op.cit., p. 171: 'through the coming of the Holy Spirit the Trinity dwells within us...'

man is remade as the habitation of God.

This truth has its negative side. If a man refuses the Spirit, he cannot share in Christ and he is not re-born.<sup>1</sup> No ontological transformation has taken place in him, although it remains true that Christ has borne his sins. It must also be said that the man who refuses the Spirit is refusing God Himself - God in His ultimate and complete self-giving. God has given Himself for man's forgiveness in Christ, and now, on the basis of that self-giving, He gives Himself in the Spirit in order to impart that forgiveness and new life. He comes to communicate His inner life to man's inner life. Thus, if He is refused, the very forgiveness of God Himself is refused, and theology must speak of the unforgiveable sin.<sup>2</sup> Two aspects of this fearful possibility can be distinguished. First, because the Spirit is the giving of the inner life of God on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ, there remains no further sacrifice for sin.<sup>3</sup> It is not that God's forgiveness is incomplete; precisely the opposite. God has expressed His forgiveness to the full, communicating it to man in His Spirit, and therefore to reject the Spirit is to reject forgiveness itself. Second, because the Spirit is the giving of God to man's inner life, and therefore the very foundation of his repentance, to refuse the Spirit is to make a

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1. This does not alter the fact that he owes his existence to Christ and that he is sustained by Him, cf. H. Küng, Justification, trans. T. Collins, E.E. Tolk and O. Grandskou (Burns and Oates, London, 1966), p. 159: 'Even the damned sinner will have a continued existence in Jesus Christ.'
  2. Matt. 12: 31-2 and parallels.
  3. Heb. 10: 26.

restoration to forgiveness and repentance impossible.<sup>1</sup> The ground of repentance has been rejected.

Barth recognises the seriousness of the sin against the Holy Spirit,<sup>2</sup> but, because he does not accord the Spirit a creative function as important as that of the Son, he does not recognise its ultimate seriousness. He can speak of the overwhelming power of the Spirit which breaks down all barriers as though there were no such thing as hardening oneself against Him.<sup>3</sup> He holds this because for him the sinner is already recreated in Christ, and therefore it is impossible to think of a final resistance to His Spirit. This inevitably leads to an undervaluing of man's responsibility to the Spirit and of his decision in regard to the grace offered to him.

These observations relate to the historical self-giving of God in the Spirit, and lead to the conclusion that Barth undervalues the creative power of that self-giving. It is now time to turn to the self-giving of man on the basis of God's self-giving.

The whole grace of God aims at man. That grace achieved its vindication when Jesus gave Himself to God in the face of the most severe temptation from Satan who had chosen against it. He exercised to the full man's responsibility to the Word of grace, perfecting His decision for grace in His self-offering on the cross. There He won through to that victory for which God crowned Him at His side.

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1. Heb. 6: 4.

2. C.D. IV/3, p. 358.

3. ibid., pp. 355-6.



God, not by necessity but by His steadfast love, requited this man according to His work (Ps. 62: 12), granting Him a share in His own ontological impossibility of sin. Jesus was rewarded at God's side with the ontological fulfillment which Adam forfeited when He chose the temptation to be 'as God'. The point to be emphasised is this: neither Adam nor Jesus enjoyed an ontological impossibility of sin, but Jesus, trusting the Father in the strength of the Spirit, won as man and for man a complete victory over the most radical temptation and thus won in man's history and responsibility the ontological impossibility of sin.

Barth unfortunately compromises this victory of grace. By locating the ontological impossibility of sin with the creation itself, and not with the creation as radically tested and proved by the Spirit of the Creator, he short-circuits his own thesis about the historical realisation of God's grace in man's history. His insight into the 'crowning' of Jesus, penetrating though it is, does not go far enough. Barth speaks of Jesus' perfectly free obedience, His 'unreserved committal' to God and God's free crowning of Him,<sup>1</sup> but he does not indicate what Jesus achieved in this freedom, and therefore he also fails to show the full scope of His being crowned.

The idea of an ontological impossibility of sin is explicit in the New Testament only in I John, where it is stated three times. 'We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.' (I Jn. 5: 18); 'No one born of God

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1. ibid., p. 383.

commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' (I Jn. 3: 9). These two passages connect the impossibility of sin with being born of God, but the following passage connects it with abiding in Christ: 'You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins....' (I Jn. 3: 5-6). It is thus reasonable to say that the ontological impossibility of sin which Christians have derives from Christ, the One who was born of God and who keeps those who abide in Him. I John does not speak of how Christ acquired this inability to sin, but other passages of the New Testament point to it. Romans 6: 1-11 speaks of the Christian's freedom from sin through his death in Christ's death (6: 7), and so indicates that freedom from sin comes through Christ's obedience unto death. The strange saying of I Peter 4: 1 - 'whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin' - connects the end of sin with Christ's sufferings in the flesh. The Synoptic Gospels, however, give the decisive clue. They show Jesus' temptations continuing right up to His death on the cross. He was even tempted to come down from the cross. By defeating these temptations and remaining steadfast throughout the ultimate 'testing' of the 'hour and power of darkness' He won through to a life beyond temptation. He still lives in our flesh (Lk. 24: 37-43) and ever lives to make intercession for us, but He has passed through the tempted life and put temptation behind Him. In the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, He has been perfected. Thus, though it is not explicit in any passage of the New Testament, it is in accord with its witness to say that Jesus triumphed over the ultimate in

temptation and was crowned with an ontological impossibility of sin corresponding to God's own freedom from temptation.

For the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews Jesus' crowning 'with glory and honour'<sup>1</sup> came at the end of an awesome contest with temptation. The writer stresses Jesus' humanity, seeing His crowning as the fulfillment of 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him..?'<sup>2</sup> and also seeing His crowning as the outcome of His being 'made perfect' through suffering.<sup>3</sup> This doctrine is parallel to that of the Apocalypse where Jesus reveals Himself as the Conqueror. He is the Victor who has won a real victory in time and has now taken His seat at the Father's side. It is on this ground that Jesus exhorts His followers to a similar conquest: 'He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.' (Rev. 3: 21). Each of the exhortations to the seven Churches includes a call to Christians to conquer and it is impossible not to associate their conquering with that of Jesus, who is described as 'one like a son of man' (1: 13), as One who suffered ('his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace' (1: 15)) and as One who has conquered (5: 5), received power (2: 27) and been crowned (3: 21). It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the whole doctrine of the Apocalypse depends on this vision of Jesus the Conqueror. For the purpose of this study, it is particularly instructive that the victory of Jesus in our flesh is stressed and that

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1. Heb. 2: 9.

2. Ps. 8: 4; Heb. 2: 6.

3. Heb. 5: 8-9.



His feet are described as being like 'burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace', since this points to His being made irreversibly perfect through suffering. The Son of man is brought to share in the indeflectible holiness of God.

If this account of the grace of God realised in Jesus Christ is substantially correct, Barth's description of the realisation of the one grace of God in Christ must be modified. He does not see that it was only by Jesus' free obedience that the ontological impossibility of sin was established. He robs the crowning of Jesus of its full significance as the perfecting of the creation, as the fulfillment of the man's potentialities. Barth does recognise, and in fact gives great weight to, the fact that the creation 'is not an end but a beginning - complete in itself and as such, but still a beginning,'<sup>1</sup> but he fails to show what the man Jesus, by the grace of God, did in the bringing of the creation to its telos. This criticism must be made carefully since, as has been seen many times in this study, Barth speaks eloquently of the man Jesus as fulfilling man's part in the covenant and so fulfilling the very raison d'être of the creation. What is lacking in Barth is the achievement of Jesus in combatting the temptation to sin, in triumphing over sin and in bringing the creation to its telos as the counterpart to God which cannot sin. He fails to bring out the difference between the 'ontological impossibility' of sin implicit in creation and its 'ontological impossibility' explicit in the recreation in Jesus.

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 109.

This modification of Barth is a serious one, and it does mean that the criticisms of Wingren and Berkouwer must be conceded insofar as they imply that a more definite content to man's responsibility must be given in the historical realisation of the grace of God. Sin is inexcuseable post Christum in a sense in which it was not ante Christum.

It has always been inexcuseable as the offence against God's grace, but now that grace has superabounded in the cross of Jesus, man is responsible in a supreme sense: 'Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay everyone for what he has done.' (Rev. 22: 12). There may be value in the suggestion of some theologians that, since man is responsible to God's grace, sin is serious according to the measure of the realisation of grace which is refused: sin before Christ should be considered as failure of responsibility to the Creator; sin after Christ is sin against one's salvation, but sin against the body of Christ in which God dwells with man is sin against the complete outpouring of God to man and therefore the sin against the Spirit which is unforgiveable.<sup>1</sup> Although this idea runs the risk of dispensationalism, it has the great merit of indicating that, since God's grace has been realised historically in the responsibility of Jesus, grace does not abrogate man's responsibility but establishes it.

This modification, however, amounts to no more than a development of Barth's fundamental thesis that God in His grace aims at man's free correspondence to Him. It concedes nothing to the concern of Wingren and Berkouwer to place law before gospel. On the contrary, the one and undivided grace of God has been realised in man's responsibility, the eternal

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1. E. Irving, The Day of Pentecost (no publisher or date), pp. 53-5.

covenant of grace has been fulfilled. The law given through Moses is a form of the gospel and has been fulfilled in the concrete historical decision of Jesus fulfilled on the cross: He loved God and His neighbour. Berkouwer approves a passage of H. Berkhof in which he suggests that Barth mitigates the essential role of the law in accusing man of sin and of calling for decision.<sup>1</sup> It must be said in reply that the effective accusation of man is the free grace of God realised in the gospel, i.e., the law of the being of God as demonstrated in Jesus Christ. Berkhof's point could better be expressed in terms of the need in Barth for a fuller account of the convincing and converting power of the Holy Spirit. For if the Spirit is the Spirit in whose strength Jesus obeyed the Word, overcame demonic temptation and fulfilled the law of the covenant, He comes to sinners as the sword who cuts to that central point of man's being where he is responsible for his obedience to the Word and for His love to God and his neighbour. He does not mitigate man's responsibility, but, precisely because He is the Spirit of grace, holds man to it.

It is appropriate to end this chapter with a reference to this work of the Spirit in holding men to their responsibility for sin and in bringing them to exercise that responsibility by turning from it. Barth undeviatingly holds (what should be clear from Jn. 16: 8-11) that it is the gospel and not the law as such which is powerful to convict of sin. The self-humbling of God to man confronts man with his pride, the obedience of Jesus shames man into realisation of his

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1. G.C. Berkouwer, op.cit., pp. 267-8.



failure to use the freedom bestowed on him (sloth), and the mutual, free self-giving of God and man in Him unmasks man's lie against this being together of God and man.

Barth's account of this third dimension of the gospel of grace is particularly rich in spiritual insight. He argues that the Spirit has incontestable competence to unmask sinners for what they in truth are because He is the Spirit of the man Jesus Christ in whom (a) the wagering of God on Jesus and Jesus on God<sup>1</sup> was (b) completed at the cross<sup>2</sup> and (c) who can speak with the authority of the God who has overcome sin.<sup>3</sup> Yet should not this glorious picture of the historical venturing of God on man and man on God in mutual responsibility be filled out by reference to the Spirit who is the content, even the concreteness, of this free commitment of each to each? It can be said of the wagering of God on man that (a) it was the trust He had in Jesus as the One to whom He gave His Spirit without measure that (b) was vindicated in His holding to Him 'for nothing' in the dereliction of sin-bearing and that (c) therefore the Spirit proceeds from this utter self-giving of God as God who has proved Himself equal to the risk involved in carrying through to its completion His decision against sin. Thus, in speaking His Word from beyond the death to sin accomplished in Him, Jesus sends forth the Spirit in whom God confirms

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1. C.D. IV/3, pp. 378-88.

2. ibid., pp. 388-408.

3. ibid., pp. 408-34.

Himself in His freedom to dwell in sinners, cutting to the root of their responsibility for sin and giving them the courage to decide for Him who has given Himself for them. It can further be said of the wagering of Jesus on God that (a) it was His trust in God by the indwelling Spirit that (b) was vindicated, since, by the Spirit, even in His dereliction He was not torn asunder but possessed Himself in His completed decision against the disintegrating temptation of Satan. Therefore (c) the Spirit proceeds from the riven side of Jesus as the concrete reality of man's free decision against sin, thus penetrating to the centre of man's responsibility and granting him the courage to venture himself by turning to God. Put comprehensively: Jesus' Word is the Word of the One whose blood is the seal of the wagering in mutual responsibility of God and man and in whom God's not choosing of Satan's decision not to venture himself on God was decisively enacted. The Spirit is the concrete freedom in which this decision was projected and completed, and therefore He creates in sinners the courage to venture themselves on Jesus' Word, the courage to exercise their responsibility in deciding for God and against sin.

To say this is merely to strengthen what Barth says, but it does allow us to speak more concretely of the convincing and converting power of the Spirit. The decision Jesus completed in His self-offering by the Spirit was the fulfillment of the law of the covenant. He loved God and His neighbour. His Spirit therefore comes to the sinner as the Spirit of love. As He awakens him to God's love, courage is created in him to confess responsibility for himself. Sins

which before were hidden in shame are now confessed. He sees that he has lived under the power of the negation of love. 'Each does but hate his neighbour as himself.'<sup>1</sup> He sees that under the guise of love, he has sought to enter the inner centre of his neighbour's life in order to harm him. He recognises that he has obeyed the devil and not the Spirit. Barth gives too little content to this necessary aspect of the responsibility for himself to which the Spirit awakens men. Again, he gives too little content to the repentance unto life which he describes with considerable formal accuracy. The Spirit creates confession of sin only in order to create repentance to life, the godly grief for sin which turns from hatred to love. This repentance takes place with tears of joy. For where the law with its message of condemnation merely enclosed men in their sin, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus liberates them to confess Him in whom is 'no condemnation'. Such is the content of the unmitigated responsibility to which the Spirit of Jesus holds men.

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1. A Pope, Moral Essay III, line 110.



CHAPTER XTHE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN

According to Barth, the crucial thing to be said in connection with the justification of man is that Jesus Christ is his justification. Jesus Christ is not merely the possibility of justification: He is its actuality. He does not require anything on our side, not even our act of faith: He Himself is our justification.

Subjective justification is therefore a matter of participating in Christ. This participation is not a sharing in the once-for-all work on the cross. That work is complete and unrepeatable. Further, we could have no part in it because we were His enemies, and His work was that of destroying us sinners (which we could not do) and of re-creating us. Rather, subjective justification means participating in Christ on the ground of His perfected work. He has created a place for us: 'We are in Him and comprehended in Him but we are still not He Himself.'<sup>1</sup>

Three observations will be helpful before proceeding to a more detailed examination of Barth's doctrine of justification.

1. In the place opened up for us by Christ, we neither merge into Him nor He into us. On the contrary, we are set up as human subjects who, in a real sense, constitute ourselves in the act of faith. The precise meaning of this will be discussed in connection with Barth's section on the Holy Spirit and faith.

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 549.

2. Justification is the basis of the justified man's works (sanctification) and his hope of redemption. There can be no question of man's works of love justifying him: his works of love issue from his justification and not vice-versa. But since this basis is sure and unshakeable, man can project himself in love and hope from this starting-point. He has a basis for a complete life of conversion, i.e., a basis for the work of love and the life in hope of redemption.

3. For Luther, justification was the article of a standing or falling Church.<sup>1</sup> Barth corrects this by pointing out that this article itself is dependent on the prior doctrine of Christ.<sup>2</sup> This correction allows the Church to develop the doctrines of sanctification and redemption, without which the doctrine of justification is itself truncated. Yet Luther's thesis is in need of qualified re-affirmation in our day. It is possible to preach Jesus Christ without bringing men to the crisis of repentance and faith. An objective Christ may be preached who does not alter men's lives. When this happens, Jesus Christ, the objective Christ, is not being preached as He is. He has been made into a dead Christ. In terms of Barth's understanding, He has been deprived of the structure of His being whereby He communicates Himself. Just as God has that 'structure' in Himself whereby He communicates Himself as Lord to the subjectivity of believers,<sup>3</sup> so Jesus Christ has

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 522.

2. Ibid., p. 527: 'The articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae is not the doctrine of justification as such, but its basis and culmination: the confession of Jesus Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge...'

3. C.D. I/1, p. 367; K.D. I/1, p. 333: 'Gestalt.'

that personal structure whereby, through the Spirit, He imparts Himself to us. Where Christ objectively is, He of necessity makes Himself known subjectively. Thus, justification by faith must stand alongside the article concerning Christ. If Christ is our justification, and He communicates Himself as such, the doctrine of Christ entails justification by faith. It could be said that Christ is truly preached only when justification by faith is also preached. In a certain sense the preaching of justification by faith is the criterion of the preaching of Christ. It is important to make this slight alteration to Barth's correction of Luther since the Church in our day needs to recover Luther's passion for the personal encounter with Christ in faith.

#### The Judgment of God

The justification of sinners depends on the execution of God's judgment on them. As has frequently been noticed, Barth repudiates any nominalism in Christianity.<sup>1</sup> God desires man himself, the real man, not the shadow or the fiction of a man. It is therefore only as He executes His judgment on the sinner, actually setting him aside and establishing his right, that He justifies him. It is an alteration in man's being. This God does in the being of Jesus Christ.

Man has sinned against God and therefore stands in a wrong relationship with Him. The restoration of a positive

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 538; Cf. also ibid., p. 542: '...[God] does not fashion a mere quid pro quo, a mere "as if", but actualities.'



relationship depends (1) on there being a right absolutely superior to man's wrong, i.e., the right of God Himself; (2) on this right being enacted in man, as it was in Jesus Christ; and (3) on the fulfillment of this right in the setting aside of man's wrong and the establishment of his new human right, which happened in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> In this movement God enacted His righteous judgment on sinners, not in appearance but in reality.

In other words, the backbone of justification is the fulfillment of the law of God's own being.<sup>2</sup> He is just in Himself.<sup>3</sup> He affirms Himself; He is faithful and true to Himself. There can be no talk of a change in God; if there were, how could 'there be a confidence in His grace which corresponds to the deity of God.'<sup>4</sup> Rather, it is 'a confirmation of His Godhead that He causes His Holy Spirit to dwell ...as the witness of His grace...in those who are still threatened by sin...'<sup>5</sup>

It is as God is true to Himself that He encounters men in their wrong. Man's wrong is his offence against God: man hates God, and thus has fallen into the destruction which he deserves. Yet this insult and affront to God cannot alter God's grace toward him - it 'grieves' and 'offends'<sup>6</sup> Him but His love burns as fire for His creature and He affirms Himself

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1. ibid., pp. 528f.

2. ibid., p. 532.

3. ibid., p. 531.

4. ibid., p. 532.

5. ibid., p. 533.

6. ibid., p. 533.

in steadfast faithfulness to man as His creature and elect. Precisely because God is love He cannot consent to man's wrong, and therefore chastises his beloved creature. Because the grace of God rules here, a crisis of total seriousness comes on man.<sup>1</sup> God kills in order to make alive.

Because this righteous and therefore faithful and merciful God holds man fast, He brings on man 'a crisis which cuts him in two, dividing him into a right and a left.'<sup>2</sup> It is a complete and perfect judgment, making man both wholly righteous and wholly unrighteous.

Life under this righteousness is not 'the static co-existence of two men.'<sup>3</sup> It is something inconceivable. It is known only as it is lived in the event of God's justification of the godless.<sup>4</sup> Because it is the dynamic judgment of God, it is not perceptible to ourselves in terms of 'self-understanding',<sup>5</sup> though it is not 'hidden from the knowledge of man.'<sup>6</sup>

What is the meaning of this riddle? It is the puzzle of the 'strange today' in which God's judgment falls on us and takes place as 'our true and actual transition from wrong to right.'<sup>7</sup> 'It is the today of Jesus Christ.'<sup>8</sup> The whole truth and actuality of our justification depends on this today of Jesus Christ. We cannot invent it: we can only 'find' it

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1. ibid., p. 538.

2. ibid., p. 541.

3. ibid., p. 543.

4. ibid., pp. 544-5.

5. ibid., p. 547.

6. ibid., p. 547.

7. ibid., p. 548.

8. ibid., p. 548.

at the place where it is reality and truth, the reality and truth which applies to us and comprehends us, our own reality and truth. We have found it where we ourselves are, and not merely appear to be. (C.D. IV/1, p. 549)

It depends, therefore, on the resurrection of Christ, on His being present to us now as our justification. It is not a matter of self-understanding, but of knowing the Other and ourselves in Him. It consists in knowledge of His history. Because the alien righteousness which comes to us is His righteousness - the righteousness of the One who was crucified and resurrected for us - it is our, my righteousness.

Barth speaks here of the 'existential' more adequately than he did in Romans and more accurately than does Bultmann. Because the Other is for us, because in being Himself He comprehends us without merging us into Himself, He makes His righteousness ours. In the language of the Fourth Gospel, all that He has is ours. Barth does not use Luther's language of imputed righteousness (though it is arguable that Luther meant something very similar to Barth). He is concerned to say that Christ's righteousness is ours without legal fiction, that it is actually ours by virtue of the being of Jesus Christ. Also, because this Other is alive today, in this present, He meets us in our today and in our situation and makes us alive in dynamic judgment. It is as we know Him that we know ourselves to be justified sinners. We have genuine self-understanding only as we look to Him and know ourselves in Him. We know our today in His today.

As Barth elucidates this riddle further, Christ's being for us in this present, and our being in Him, becomes



clearer. He first points out that, in the concrete history of Jesus Christ, God has realised His right against the wrong of man.<sup>1</sup> God effectually substituted Himself for man,<sup>2</sup> identifying Himself with man,<sup>3</sup> so becoming his justification. On its negative side this involved the setting aside of the doer of this wrong.<sup>4</sup> God Himself as man did right in our place, and therefore 'between us and our past there stands positively and divisively the act of right which is His death.'<sup>5</sup> In Christ, therefore, our sin is absolutely finished: His action as the passion of the cross bars the way back. On its positive side God's judgment involved the establishment and introduction of the new man. Again, this happened in Christ and not in ourselves, yet in such a way that it is true of our being in Him. God resurrected Him and made us new men in Him.

His resurrection is the beginning from which we all come when we leave behind the past which He has concluded, going forward in Him to the future which is already present. (C.D. IV/1, p. 556)

Bultmann has a fine passage in which he says that in forgiveness we have freedom from the past so that we are free to live in the present for the future.<sup>6</sup> He does, however, locate this freedom in the present moment of our decision of faith. If Barth is correct, this freedom should be located in the decision enacted in Christ and vindicated in

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 550.

2. *ibid.*, p. 550.

3. *ibid.*, p. 551.

4. *ibid.*, pp. 550-2.

5. *ibid.*, p. 554.

6. R. Bultmann, History and Eschatology (University Press, Edinburgh, 1957), pp. 150-1.

His resurrection. It is in Christ that the past is buried and in His resurrection that our future reaches us in our today. As we participate in Him we have the freedom in our present to turn from the past to the future. Negatively, it means our basic turning away from wrong; positively, it is our basic turning to God. It is our affair only as it takes place in Him.

In Christ, then, the old has been removed in order to make place for the new. He is the Way in whom there is the irreversible movement forward from our sin into our righteousness. We move along this Way as we participate in His today. In His today, our totally sinful past is still present but behind us, and our totally justified future is ahead of us but present with us.

Barth concludes his account of the judgment of God by showing that in justifying us God justified Himself. God was not unaffected by our justification.<sup>1</sup> It cost Him His personal interference and intervention. It is true that in the first instance He justified Himself, but this is the basis of the seriousness whereby He kills in order to make alive.<sup>2</sup> (He justified Himself as Creator, not allowing sin to overrule His right as Creator; deeper than this, He justified Himself as man's covenant partner; and, higher, in union with man, He justified man in Christ's cross and resurrection.) He did not need to justify Himself, for He has no need of man. Yet He gave Himself in Christ in order that He might justify

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 560.

2. ibid., pp. 561f.

us 'and, on the basis of His self-demonstration', give us a share 'in His own inner-life.'<sup>1</sup>

God is Himself, therefore, only as He expresses the inner riches of His being and does so with such free grace that He gives us sinners a share in His own inner-life. This meant for God the passion of uniting Himself with sinners in order to put sin to death and the vindicating of His right to demand such obedience of Christ, i.e., the resurrection of Christ and ourselves with Him. Nothing less than this satisfied His justice. He lived out this inner law of His being, thus satisfying Himself, and therefore also His love, His justice, His honour and His wrath. In satisfying Himself, He also satisfied us, for He enacted His wrath against our unsatisfactory being and established peace between Himself and us.

With this concentration on what pleases and satisfies God Himself, Barth continues an important tradition in Christian theology. In justification we have to do with God, and only as we have to do with Him do we have to do with law and justice. Man stands before God (coram Dei). It is not merely rectoral justice or the order of the universe which man has offended by sin: he has offended God Himself. It is only as He is satisfied - and this includes His righteous wrath - that we have peace with Him. Anselm, Luther, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards (to name but a few) saw this clearly. McLeod Campbell found that he had to re-affirm this against certain modifications of Calvin.<sup>2</sup> He pointed out that in justification

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1. ibid., p. 568.

2. McLeod Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement (James Clarke, London, 1959), p. 81.



we have to do with God's absolute justice, not merely with the justice He must maintain as the ruler of His creation. The preaching of conversion can be truly effective only if it presents sinners with the fact that it is God that they have offended and that it is He who gives Himself in pardon. Barth has made this unambiguously clear. No law comes between God and the justification of sinners. God lived out the law of His being in justifying us, and therefore sinners may trust His grace as being identical with Himself and His law.<sup>1</sup> God justified Himself in justifying them, expressing the law of His being, and therefore did that which is supremely lawful.

Barth also uncovers the danger of a common misconception of the justification of the sinner. To distressed persons forgiveness can easily seem to work in this manner: we cannot suffer what is needed to propitiate God, but Christ has suffered the measure of punishment which we could not attain. We are forgiven for His sake. For the sake of His payment we are free. Barth's account of justification provides a powerful answer to this misconception. First, we are justified not merely 'for Christ's sake'. We are justified realiter in Christ. And, second, this is because Christ not merely suffered instead of us but was united with us so that the sinner was put to death and the new man raised to life. The sinner is thus not exposed to the fear that his justification depends on the transference to him of a freedom from condemnation essentially unrelated to him. On the contrary,

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 532.

his justification has involved a genuine condemnation of his sinful being and a genuine justification in the presence of God. The judgment of God has been executed on him through his participation in Christ.

When the sinner is convinced that his justification is both real and just he has confidence and even boldness in the presence of God. It is this boldness that Barth's account of justification encourages, and which is of great value in bringing men wholly to turn to God.

### The Pardon of Man

God's judgment is man's pardon. It is unconditional and true whether or not men accept it. This pardon is a divisive judgment, 'since it is God's sentence on man, the 'content of His Word to us.'<sup>1</sup> As such it has absolute authority. It is God's unconditional Yes to sinners, calling for an unconditional human Yes in response.<sup>2</sup> In other words, this divine pardon is something which happens in man. It is the living Word of the living God in every present of every man.<sup>3</sup>

Looking backward, this justification is the pardon of sinful man. The sinner is pronounced free, free from himself, in this sentence.<sup>4</sup> Barth insists that no-one has tasted 'the surpassing glory of this event' who has not recognised himself

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 570.

2. ibid., p. 570.

3. ibid., p. 573.

4. ibid., p. 574.

as a sinner.<sup>1</sup> Man has no basis for this pardon in himself: it exists only because God forgives, and forgives the sinner.

Man does not grow beyond the need for forgiveness.

'There is no present in which the justification of man is not still the beginning of his justification.'<sup>2</sup> It is always the miracle in which divine pardon breaks into man's unwillingness; and there is never a present in which man does not need to cry out 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' But if man does not progress toward worthiness of forgiveness, this is no cause for hesitation in our confidence: God's mercy is perfect and therefore the beginning and the completion of justification are simultaneous. This is why, for example, the so-called penitential psalms thrill with the sense of mercy and are joyful songs of 'thanksgiving.'<sup>3</sup>

If there is no place for frivolity in relation to past sin, even less is there any room 'for questioning...the goal to which the justified man moves in every present.'<sup>4</sup> Man is a sinner, but he is already justified. So true is this that it is a 'test of the genuineness of the confession of sin' that a man 'who is ready to accuse himself of corruption' is even readier to accept God's sentence of justification.<sup>5</sup>

Barth offers some shrewd comments on man's willingness (or unwillingness) to give up boasting of his sins, something he thinks the modern novel, for all its greater awareness of sin,

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1. ibid., p. 574.

2. ibid., p. 575.

3. ibid., p. 577.

4. ibid., p. 591.

5. ibid., p. 593.



is unready to do.<sup>1</sup> The man who is justified knows that the promise of pardon rules in the present with such power that he moves from his past into his future.

Barth says that 'we can gather together the whole promise, as the Creed does, under the term: "forgiveness of sins."<sup>2</sup> Man does not possess this forgiveness. It is promised to him, and therefore there is no present in which he does not have to look for it and to receive it. Man enjoys it only as he moves forward into it. Forgiveness only appears to have a backward reference. It does not mean that God makes what has happened not to have happened,<sup>3</sup> but that God really frees a man from his sin:

The act of divine forgiveness is that God sees and knows the stain [of sins] infinitely better than the man himself, and abhors it infinitely more than he does even in his deepest penitence - yet He does not take it into consideration, He overlooks it, He covers it, He passes it by, He puts it behind Him, He does not charge it to the man, He does not "impute" it (2 Cor. 5: 19). (C.D. IV/1, p. 597)

It is pure forgiveness: powerful, because the One offended pardons; lawful because He exercises His right as God; not only verbal but effectual because He pardons as He forgives and so alters the human situation from its very foundation; and it does not treat man 'as if' he were not the sinner that he is, but it is the 'creative work of God in the power of which man, even as the old man that he...still is, is no longer that man, but is already...the new man.'<sup>4</sup>

Barth's account of the unconditional pardon of man must be praised because it shows that man has good ground for

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1. ibid., p. 594.

2. ibid., p. 596.

3. ibid., p. 597.

4. ibid., p. 597.

unmeasured confidence in God. If God forgives the sinner, he is forgiven in very truth. It is a present reality, since the now of Jesus Christ is man's now. Yet this forgiveness is promised to man and therefore does not become his possession, but sets him in an irreversible movement from sin into righteousness.

In this way Barth gives what might be called the existential dimension of forgiveness the place which properly belongs to it. Further, he allows the emotional and psychological concomitants of forgiveness their legitimate place. This may be said because Barth bases his account, not on man's apprehension of what takes place, but on the reality of Jesus Christ who in His today claims the whole man for Himself. If later it is argued that a richer account of these elements (existential and psychological) is needed, the argument can be sustained only by developing Barth's own primary thesis.

Barth's understanding of the now of divine forgiveness, i.e., the simultaneity of its beginning with its completion, contrasts sharply with that of R.C. Moberly in Atonement and Personality. Moberly was much concerned with the righteousness of forgiveness<sup>1</sup> but could regard forgiveness as just only if God could find an element of 'forgiveableness' in the repenting sinner.<sup>2</sup> God is able to forgive on the grounds of a foreseen and perfect holiness. Thus he held that

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1. R.C. Moberly, Atonement and Personality (John Murray, London, 1904), p. 48.

2. ibid., p. 53.

'forgiveness is not finally consummated till the consummation of holiness.'<sup>1</sup> Moberly's view inevitably imported a sense of strain into the reception of forgiveness: forgiveness is to be attained, and so the penitent sinner cannot abound in the thanksgiving which Barth noticed in the penitential psalms. The now of forgiveness became dependent on moving forward in holiness, rather than on receiving Christ's completed forgiveness in the present. Inevitably man's striving for holiness began to assume an indispensable role in forgiveness itself, and thus both the existential and psychological dimensions of forgiveness were distorted. In particular, forgiveness was no longer pure forgiveness; forgiveness ceased to be a complete and trustworthy reality in the present and it lost its joyful gratitude.

#### The Subjective Apprehension of Justification: Justification by Faith

Barth has no section on repentance as such. Though he has much to say about it, all that he has in mind is included under the heading of 'faith'. Repentance is the negative side of faith. It is not a prior condition of faith, far less a condition of forgiveness. It is the acceptance of the judgment on man implied in forgiveness, and it is that renunciation of trust in oneself whose positive side is trust, faith, in Christ. Repentance is therefore not gloomy mourning over sin, but joyful giving up of the sinful self and thus the turning to life.

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1. ibid., p. xix; cf. pp. 71f.



Barth begins his discussion with the problem of realism. Who is the man who is pardoned?<sup>1</sup> Does he exist? If what has been said above about Jesus Christ is correct, there must be a self-demonstration of the justified man, but where do we find him?

Man cannot himself produce this self-demonstration. If he attempts to do so he only proves that he does not trust the reality of God's justification.<sup>2</sup> All that he can do - and this is faith - is to let it happen in its own power.

This happens in faith because it is the human act which corresponds to the divine act of justification, and may therefore be counted as righteous. Faith is 'reckoned' (eklogisthē) to man by God as dikaiosunē, as a righteous human work, i.e., as a work which corresponds to God's righteousness.<sup>3</sup> This does not, of course, mean that faith itself is a justifying work, but rather that faith is a righteous human act, and therefore not merely a passive receiving but an active attitude to God on man's part which God may count as righteousness. It is indeed righteous in that it trusts God to be what He is: the justifier of the ungodly.

What is the meaning of this faith 'which makes a faithful...and adequate response to the faithfulness of

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 608.

2. ibid., p. 612.

3. ibid., p. 615. This passage answers the question of C. O'Grady: '...where does [Barth] say that man's actions with God's grace are not totally sinful?' The Church in Catholic Theology (G. Chapman, London, 1969), p. 249. While Barth will not say that the sinner can have any part in his justification, he does affirm that grace creates in him true and good actions.

God...?'<sup>1</sup> It is wholly and utterly humility.<sup>2</sup> The vain-glorious man abdicates from his vain-glory.<sup>3</sup> It is not a self-chosen humility (which would only be another form of pride), nor is it the resignation of enforced humility (which would again be pride), but the humility of obedience.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore

a free decision, but made with the genuine necessity of obedience. To put it the other way round, it is a necessary decision, but made with the necessity of a genuine and therefore a free obedience.

(C.D. IV/1, p. 620)

In this sense, faith is 'comforted despair' and contrasts with the 'wild desperate despair' of self-chosen faith.<sup>5</sup>

On the one hand, faith excludes all human works.<sup>6</sup> This negation is based on the positive truth that before God man is not nothing, but someone, someone whose act of faith He values. He values the appropriate response to His act of justification and values it as righteousness.

This self-demonstration of the justified man is the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ, who lives as the 'author of the justification of all men.'<sup>7</sup> There is no-one whose sin is not finished and whose justification is not perfected in Him.<sup>8</sup> Because of this inclusiveness of Christ, all other grounds of confidence are excluded. 'He alone

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1. ibid., p. 617.

2. ibid., p. 618.

3. ibid., p. 618.

4. ibid., p. 620.

5. ibid., p. 621.

6. ibid., p. 627.

7. ibid., p. 629.

8. ibid., p. 630.

has fulfilled the penitence in which the conversion of man to God is actually and definitely accomplished.<sup>1</sup> The exclusiveness of faith is really the inclusiveness of Christ in which He has justified all men. Every attempt of men to secure their own conversion is superfluous, ignorant of the conversion of all men and therefore of their own conversion.

For Barth, it is the positive form of justifying faith which is all important. Renunciation, penitence, etc., are negative only in appearance. Faith is openness to Jesus Christ and as such it is a human form of being ( menschliche Daseinform ).<sup>2</sup> The nature of its object, the living Jesus Christ, empties the human subject of all pride and brings him to that human act and experience which corresponds to Him. Many theologies so stress the negative aspect of faith that faith becomes almost a via negative. In some protestant theologies it is impossible to see why it is faith which God reckons as righteousness. But where Jesus Christ is clearly understood as the object of faith, faith means gladly trusting Him who is our justification. It is a positive act. Barth even goes so far as to say that faith as humble obedience corresponds to the humble obedience of Christ, and in a certain sense it is the proper form of imitatio Christi.<sup>3</sup> As pure receptivity of Christ, faith imitates Him, following Him in humble obedience. Just as Jesus Christ who was rich for our sakes became poor, faith is poor and thereby receives all.<sup>4</sup>

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1. ibid., p. 632.

2. K.D. IV/1, p. 707.

3. C.D. IV/1, p. 634.

4. ibid., p. 635.



### Assessment of Barth's Doctrine of the Justification of Man

Barth's understanding of justification by faith alone depends on the doctrine that Jesus Christ is the justification of all men. The subjective depends on the objective. Man's knowledge of justification has this sure foundation, resting not on himself but on God. Barth opens the way for a full and rich experience of justification. If the Church and the individual look to their own experience, they lose their contact with the source of that experience and so the experience withers away. But if they look to Christ, their experience is constantly renewed.<sup>1</sup>

Barth's doctrine may be considered as an unfolding of the Biblical saying: 'we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially those who believe.' (I Tim. 4: 10). The living God is Himself the Saviour, whether or not people believe in Him. Further, He is the Saviour of all men, though He is the Saviour of believers in a special sense. Barth's unswerving allegiance to this doctrine enables him to speak clearly where the modern Church often speaks ambiguously. Some points may be made in this connection.

1. The most obvious point is that God does not become our Saviour in virtue of our accepting Him.

2. If God is the Saviour of all men, there can be no limitation to the preaching of the gospel. The gospel is intended for every man. The kinds of Calvinism which would limit the extent of the atonement are ruled out from the

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1. K. Barth, Dogmatik im Grundriss, (EVZ-Verlag, Zürich, 1947), p. 161.

beginning.<sup>1</sup> That Christ died for all men means that Christ died for me. In his doctrine of election Barth carefully points out that the gospel is properly preached only when it is addressed directly to the individual. God loves all men, therefore He loves you.<sup>2</sup>

Barth, however, makes little of the corollary of this gospel that if a man does not know God the Saviour he is resisting his salvation. This corollary is important in preaching, and emphasises the urgency of accepting the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

3. Barth acknowledges the unconditional freeness of the gospel. Repentance is not a work whereby one becomes either worthy or capable of receiving the gospel. It is the reverse side of 'through faith alone'. Jesus Christ is already man's justification and therefore He is simply to be accepted. There can be no preparation to receive Him. He comes to sinners. This means the giving up of all 'justifying' works, even repentance and faith themselves in so far as they are thought of as means of making oneself worthy of the gospel. Barth does not stress the elements of sorrow and grief which are present in repentance, and this is appropriate to the extent that these emotions are often attempts to make oneself worthy of forgiveness and are the last and most subtle forms of self-justification. A man who thinks that he has plumbed the depths of despair is often

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1. Note the limitation of the atonement in C. Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message (Tyndale, London, 1967), p. 135.

2. See Chapter II, pp. 116f.

3. McLeod Campbell did not shrink from using this corollary in his preaching and it gave great urgency to his message. See Chapter III, p. 136.

proud of this very fact and hardens himself all the more against true repentance. In the Dogmatics Barth makes this point particularly tellingly because he bases it on the present Word of Jesus Christ. We are not constrained to posit our despair absolutely because Jesus Christ places Himself in our present, and therefore we are freed to posit ourselves in obedience to Him.

One aspect of Barth's mature teaching is particularly liberating here. It is often thought that a sinner must judge himself to be a sinner before he can receive justification. Sometimes evangelists speak of the steps required to accept Christ, and put early on the list the realisation of the fact that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. While it is an integral part of accepting the gospel to judge oneself a sinner, it is only in Christ that one is able to do this. The marvellous truth is that Christ judges us to be sinners and that our judgment of ourselves takes place only in His judgment. When this is understood, self-judgment ceases to be an impossible burden with many of the marks of self-punishment and becomes the liberating freedom of confirming Christ's judgment.

4. It cannot be doubted that justification involves man in a crisis, and that this crisis includes painful emotional elements. Nor can it reasonably be doubted that those deeply experienced in the Christian life are able to help others through this crisis. Of the many instances which come to mind, that of Staupitz and Luther is particularly well known. The Roman Church has long recognised the value of spiritual advisers, men experienced in advising concerning spiritual



matters. It is difficult to see anything but good in the extraordinary influence of the Cure d'Ars. His influence was simply that of a man deeply experienced in prayer and the spiritual life who could help others with their difficulties. The protestant Churches used to be rich in such men. One has only to read Baxter's The Reformed Pastor to see what deep penetration in spiritual matters the Puritans expected of their ministers. Yet in the contemporary protestant Church even where accuracy in doctrine is valued, spiritual wisdom is often sadly lacking. Helmut Thielicke has somewhere remarked that the recent improvement in doctrinal accuracy in the German Church has been accompanied by almost negligible spiritual results.

Barth has given the Church an extraordinarily careful, perceptive and complete account of man's justification, an account desperately needed by the Church. The justification of which he has written needs to become the experience of people in the parishes. Without compromising his doctrinal accuracy - for that would be to lose everything, even justification itself - his doctrine needs to be developed towards the pastoral ministry. Barth has already begun this task. The Dogmatics is rich in spiritual insight and Barth writes with the wisdom of a man who knows the Lord of whom he speaks. Though he has criticised the concept of Christian mysticism, many passages of the Dogmatics recall the teaching of those 'mystics' who have gone far along the road of the love of God. Yet he falls short of giving us the urgent wrestling with the problems of men encountering and growing in Christ. Something

like what Henry Drummond called 'spiritual diagnosis',<sup>1</sup> would be of great value to the Church, i.e., an account of the sensitivity toward both God and man which is needed for the nurturing of men and women in Christ.

If a satisfactory account of the experience of repentance and faith is to be won, there can be no return to Schleiermacher. It is by holding to Christ alone, and not to the experience of Him, that we grow in the knowledge of Him. Also, the superiority of Calvin's starting point to that of Luther's must be recognised, i.e., theology must begin with Jesus Christ and not with unregenerate man. Jesus Christ alone gives helpful knowledge of man's desperate plight. Yet no theology of justification can be considered adequate which does not address itself to the man who needs justification. Apologetics will be of no help, since, as Barth argues, it surrenders from the outset the very strength of its address to the unbeliever, i.e., the self-witness of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is indeed the reality of man's justification, the account of the experience of justification will have to be undertaken within the circle of the knowledge of Christ.

Two ways of going about this task seem to be possible. First, a history of the personal experience of men as they come through the crisis of accepting Christ. Second, an account of how Jesus Christ has taken up the human situation and experience of it, and has opened up the experience and knowledge of justification for those who participate in Him.

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1. Henry Drummond: An Anthology, ed. J.W. Kennedy (Harper, New York, 1953), pp. 221-43.

Augustine's Confessions is the best known example of the first way. Although it retains elements of Platonism, Christ is the hidden protagonist of Augustine's pilgrimage. His search for the good life is undergirded by Christ's search for him, and the famous crisis in Book VIII is simply the time when Christ brought him to realise that He, Christ, is life and that Augustine must either 'put Him on' or harden himself against Him.<sup>1</sup> Christ surrounds Augustine, is closer to him than he is to himself, and is his soul's peace. He narrows down on him until he reaches the point where he must confront Him and acknowledge Him. It is, of course, predestined that Augustine will accept, but, in the Confessions at least, this means that his whole life is encompassed by Christ, that Christ is the ambience in whom he lives and moves and has his being, and that therefore he can find himself only by finding Christ. He is subject to no compulsion. He becomes no automaton - precisely the opposite, since it is at the climax of his search, when it is at its most personal and intimate, that he accepts Christ. He has tried other solutions (the way of the flesh, Manicheism, Neo-Platonism) and they have failed - though each successive solution is lightly nearer the truth. He now freely, and yet of necessity, accepts Christ.

In modern times Augustine's concept of the movement toward faith in Christ has been sharpened into the image of Christ as the One who chooses us, loves us and pursues us until He captures us. He is the hound of Heaven (Thompson).<sup>2</sup>

1. Augustine, Confessions, trans. T. Matthew (Collins, Fontana, 1957), p.217.

2. F. Thompson, The Hound of Heaven.



He surrounds us with Himself even while we flee from Him and in His love He will not let us go but pursues us until we freely and yet of necessity accept Him. G.M. Hopkins, in a particularly powerful passage, addresses God as 'Thou mastering me God!'<sup>1</sup> Christ appears to be our enemy (cf. Jeremiah): we flee Him and it is only when He captures us that we realise that He is infinitely tender even in His severity. His severity is the severity of unrelenting love.<sup>2</sup> Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, with its extraordinarily vivid and precise exploration of the states of mind involved in discovering the grace of God, seems to have provided the seminal pattern and imagery. The Mariner kills the albatross and thinks no more of it until he is becalmed at sea. There he becomes the prisoner of his own action. He becomes his own victim, caught in the guilt of his past.<sup>3</sup> Yet he is surrounded by an imperceptible but ambient grace which holds him prisoner until, at the depth of his self-hatred and knowledge of his own ugliness, he is freed to bless the Creator and His works.<sup>4</sup> This secret grace is intimately connected with the albatross, who has unmistakeable affinity with Christ (the language used in speaking of the bird suggests a sacramental presence in which the creation is held together).<sup>5</sup> It thus appears that Christ Himself has been pursuing the Mariner and will not let

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1. G.M. Hopkins, The Wreck of the Deutschland, stanza 1.

2. See Lamentations 3, where the writer can both say: 'He [God] is to me a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding' (v. 10) and: 'New every morning are his mercies' (vs. 22-3).

3. S. Coleridge, The Ancient Mariner, stanza 34.

4. ibid., stanza 66.

5. ibid., stanzas 16-19.

him go until he blesses the grace which holds him. The poem provides a basic metaphor for the interpretation of Christian experience, a metaphor which enables us to see both the preceding grace of God and the awakening to genuine self-knowledge which are at work in conversion.

This first way of gaining access to knowledge of justification depends on a second way. Jesus Christ took up the experience of fallen man, converted man to God and thus became the One in whom the experience of justification is opened up for sinners. It is only because Christ has taken up and redeemed man's knowledge of his situation that he may have the self-knowledge described above.

This second way of understanding the experience of justification may best be approached through the Hebrew Psalter. The Psalter explores the condition of man in the presence of his Creator and Lord. It gives us the experience of men like ourselves, men involved in sin. How, then, can it really describe our situation in the presence of the Holy One of Israel?

It is not only the innocence psalms which raise this problem. The words of a great penitential psalm:

Thou art justified in thy sentence  
and blameless when thou judgest (Ps. 51: 4)

imply an innocence as inaccessible to sinful man as do the words of a great innocence psalm:

if thou triest my heart,  
if thou visitest me by night,  
if thou testest me,  
thou wilt find no wickedness in me. (Ps. 17: 3).

How can man praise God's righteous judgment when he is a sinner and therefore unable to know either the purity of God's

justice or the impurity of that which God judges?

The only solution to this problem can be if a perfectly just and holy man prays these psalms. Only such a man would know God's righteousness and the condition of man as revealed in His sight. This has in fact happened in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. He has prayed and pleaded the Hebrew Psalter before His God and our God, and has done so in our flesh and in our name. In this way He has made the experience of the psalms accessible to sinners.

Yet does not this solution entail the blasphemy of denying Christ's perfect righteousness? If Christ prayed the penitential psalms, must He not have confessed personal sin? The answer must be that it was because He knew no sin that He could confess the perfect righteousness of God's sentence. Because He was sinless He knew the utter evil of sin. Further, it was in the strength of this righteousness that He not only condemned sin as it is in others but also loved these others as Himself and confessed their sin as His own. To say that Christ prayed psalms 32, 51, 69, 130, etc., and that He prayed them personally, is to praise His sinlessness. It is to acknowledge that righteousness in Him whereby He loved sinners as Himself and acknowledged and judged their sin in His own person.

In order to demonstrate the value of this doctrine for the Church, psalm 51 will be studied briefly from three perspectives. First, in relation to its writer, a man of the Old Testament; second, in relation to Christ; and, finally, in relation to the man of the new covenant, post Christum. This procedure is to some extent artificial, since the psalm



does not exist on three levels, yet a careful reading of the text as it stands shows that it is unintelligible without a reference beyond it to a sinless man. Jesus Christ is the One who makes it intelligible, and a third reading is needed in order to indicate its meaning for those to whom He makes its experience accessible.

(1) Psalm 51 falls into a number of parts. There is an initial plea for mercy followed by a full confession of the writer's sin against God and the righteousness of God's judgment (vs. 1-5). The writer then considers God's desire for truth in the inward being and accordingly prays that his inner life be thoroughly cleansed, purged (vs. 6-12). As he prays this he also longs that his lips be opened that he might declare the righteousness of the God who thus has mercy on him (vs. 13-15). He realises that God's mercy is so great that He does not delight in sacrifice, but accepts the broken heart of the sinner (vs. 16-17). This sacrifice of penitence and thanksgiving pleases God and He will then again delight in the sacrifices for sin prescribed in the law (vs. 18-19).

This brief analysis of the contents of the psalm shows that it encompasses a clear development of ~~exp~~ experience. It could be said to illustrate the logic of repentance. It moves from confession of sin, through acknowledgement of a completely new beginning, to self-offering in thanksgiving for God's mercy. God's causeless love (there is no reason whatever for Him to love a sinner or to show him mercy), His grace, is the presupposition of this entire movement. It is even the ground of the initial confession of sin. The opening burst in which the writer pours out his acknowledgement of wickedness

calls on God's mercy (hesed). He appeals to unconditional mercy, promising God neither sacrifice nor repentance. In the act of confessing his appalling offence, he makes no offer to appease God's wrath. He runs straight to God's mercy. The opening confession is thus a pleading and a praising of God's pure mercy: the writer pleads 'the multitude of thy tender mercies' (v. 1). In the light of this mercy he confesses the iniquity of his sin, recognising himself (v. 3) as utterly sinful (v. 5) against God (v. 4). In the presence of the purity of God he sees God's desire for truth in the inward parts, and, like the writer of psalm 32 he seeks to have no guile (32: 2) before God. Because he counts on God's mercy he does not hide his sin or lie about it but confesses it in order that his inward parts may be cleansed of it. He knows that God's mercy is so sure that He will wash away what offends Him and so God will again be able to look on His servant and uphold him with His spirit. This psalm pays great attention to the inner parts, the spirit (ruah), of the sinner, because God desires fellowship with the very centre of man's being which is defiled by sin. It thinks in terms of nothing less than a thorough renovation of the inner man. Because the writer is confident of God's willingness completely to purify him, he concludes his psalm with a celebration of God's desire, His delight and good-pleasure. Just as God's mercy rests only on His good-pleasure, so the psalmist now thanks God for His mercy by offering himself in thanksgiving for His good-pleasure. God does not delight in sacrifice but He will accept a broken spirit.

There is, however, a riddle here. Vs. 5-7 imply a

judgment on sin so radical that the sinner is wholly judged and can continue to exist only if he is created anew. He knows that God is justified in His sentence against him. Further, this offence against God issues from the origins of his identity (v. 5). The psalmist agrees with God's judgment that he can only be put to death and, if he is to live, re-created. He must have a new heart. But what is the basis for this knowledge? If a man is a sinner he cannot judge himself to be the sinner he is. Again, how can the psalmist speak of the creation of a new heart when the only creation the Old Testament knows of is the one creation at the beginning? This psalm implies a total rejection of the sinner and his total recreation. In Barth's language, there is a complete cleavage into a left and a right, into the sinner and the justified. The closer this psalm is studied the clearer it becomes that it calls for completion in terms of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

(2) The radical conversion of man - the complete judgment of the old and the introduction of the new - celebrated in psalm 51 could happen only in the sinless man, Jesus Christ. He alone exercised that perfect holiness in which sin can be known as the intolerable thing it is; He alone can justify the radical judgment of God on the sinner; and in Him alone can there be the basis for the new creation.

Psalm 51 seems to bear particular relevance to Jesus' work on the cross, since it was there that He justified God's sentence against sinners. The cross is the only place where an end of sin and a beginning of righteousness so radical as is implied in this psalm has taken place. It was here also



that the Amen was uttered to the divine righteousness. In our humanity and for our sakes Jesus acknowledged that God is justified in His sentence and blameless in His judgment. In this way humanity for the first time answered and responded to God's righteousness, and similarly it for the first time received the justification which is in that righteousness.

(3) What, then, are we to say of psalm 51 in the era post Christum? Without Christ the words of this psalm exaggerate the truth: no sinner can truthfully exclaim that he knows that he is totally sinful. But when the sinner receives the Spirit of Christ, in whom this confession was perfectly made in our humanity, he is freed to pray the words of this psalm in sober truth.

The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and deceives itself even in its most sincere confession of sin. It is Jesus alone who is without guile, the sincere confessor of sin. As He confessed sin, He acknowledged the righteousness of the divine sentence and so justified God. He made the true repentance for sin which claims nothing for itself and throws itself entirely on God's righteousness. He looked entirely to God for His justification. In this way Jesus received the justification of God in our humanity and for us men. He does not keep the truth which is in Him to Himself: he communicates the riches of His heart to us crooked sinners. In the strength of His Holy Spirit He gives us all that is His, and thus brings us to participate in the true confession of sin and the reception of justification which took place in Him.

Jesus Christ made vicarious repentance for us. He has made the experience of the psalms His own and prayed them in their truth. This does not mean, however, that He has prayed them so that we do not pray them. He has not prayed psalm 51 instead of us, but in our humanity and in such a way that we are liberated to pray it in truth. We can pray it only in Christ, only in His Spirit, but precisely because the Spirit joined with Christ as He prayed in our fallen humanity, His Spirit now brings us to an active participation in the prayer life of Christ. It needs to be stressed that Christ has once and for all made repentance for our sin: He alone has justified God so as to make atonement. But, on the basis of that perfect repentance, we are liberated to follow Him into the presence of His God and there to acknowledge for ourselves the righteousness of God. On the basis of His atonement we are freed to share in His repentance and His faith, and thus to come before His God as justified sinners.

In view of these observations it becomes clear that Barth could have given a richer account of the faith in which the sinner receives his justification. Later in this chapter Barth's account of the act of faith will be discussed in some detail, but it is appropriate at this point to notice the weakness in his correlation of Christ's repentance and faith with ours. If it is the case that Christ took up and made His own the experience of psalm 51, and if it is further the case that we participate in Him through His Spirit so that all that He has is ours, it follows that we also judge ourselves to be sinners and that we also exercise

that faith in God's righteousness which is counted as righteousness. If Christ prayed: 'thou art justified in thy sentence and blameless in thy judgment', we also, through His Spirit, pray these words. There is in the Christian life a real and indispensable self-judgment. The fact that this is self-judgment in the Lord (I Cor. 11: 31-32) only confirms and emphasises this truth. Barth neglects this element of self-judgment. He neglects the judgment of the sinner in which he acknowledges the Lord's judgment on him and for his own part says the Amen to it.

One further aspect of psalm 51 is significant. As the psalmist pleads God's good-pleasure, as he pleads with the heart of God, his own heart and affections are liberated into their true and proper freedom. The psalmist is released into the true feelings of a man - a man who is truthful and not deceiving - and thus his feelings, emotions, desires, in short, his whole emotive being, comes into its own. His whole emotive life has found its proper centre and is therefore no longer bound in eccentricity and distortion.

The ground of this liberation is in God. Man is truly man only as he lives in fellowship with God. This fellowship depends on God's turning toward man. Psalm 51 is rich in insight into God's feeling toward man. The psalm begins with the psalmist calling on God to be merciful, propitious, toward him. He recognises himself as abhorrent in God's sight, yet calls on God's desire for truth. He realises that God does not delight in sacrifice, nor would He be pleased with burnt offering; rather, God delights in



and does not despise the lowliness of a broken heart. The psalm concludes with God's delight in right sacrifices. It is God's good-pleasure to purge man of his sin and to recreate him. Thus, as God satisfies His desire in relation to man He also brings the sinner to peace, joy and satisfaction.

This dimension of feeling, which is present in the psalms generally, fills out Barth's doctrine of the justification of man. It is not a superfluous dimension, as though it were merely an addition to something more significant, but refers to the total man. It refers to man's heart, to the seat of his thinking and feeling, to the centre of his life. It refers to the centre where a man finds the satisfaction of his being (or fails to find it). Barth has refused to countenance anything but a realistic account of justification, but his thought could be given greater realism, greater human depth, by taking into account this dimension of the heart.

In this study of psalm 51, the work of McLeod Campbell has not been explicitly mentioned, but his understanding of Christ's vicarious humanity has been constantly in the background. As in The Nature of the Atonement, it has been stressed that Christ's confession opens up confession for us. It has also become clear that, as this act of man's heart is carried through, he calls out to God's fatherly heart. In justification there is an intensely personal movement between man and God, a movement which is itself called forth by the Father. Barth does not ignore this movement - indeed, it is an integral part of his description of the judgment enacted on man - but he does not give it the rich content which he

could have given it if he had taken more seriously Christ's vicarious humanity. It is hoped that the preceding discussion goes some way toward opening up that rich content.

### Faith and the Holy Spirit

It was argued in Chapter I that since the Enlightenment man's subjectivity has come to the forefront of his understanding of himself. Christian theology has come to recognise that man's being the object of God's love means for him that he posits himself as an active subject and that he makes himself the man that he is (cf. I Cor. 15: 10). Barth has taken up this bold theme and does not hesitate to speak of man's positing himself in action<sup>1</sup> and of his freedom for the good. It is impossible to miss in Barth the richly active place he gives to the human subject - a far more active place than is found even in Calvin.

In considering the 'subjective realisation' (subjectiven Realisierung)<sup>2</sup> of the atonement Barth argues that theology must not leave Jesus Christ. The entire 'active participation of man in the divine act of reconciliation'<sup>3</sup> is carried through by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. He brings men genuinely to turn to God, and they do it not in 'their own reason and power'<sup>4</sup> but only as God converts them to Himself. The Spirit is Lord, attesting Himself as the Spirit of the Son, thus distinguishing Himself from all other spirits

1. C.D. III/2, pp. 181, 194ff.

2. C.D. IV/1, p. 643; K.D. IV/1, p. 719.

3. ibid., p. 643.

4. Barth is quoting from Luther, ibid., p. 645.

who are not lord in this way. 'He is the form of [Christ's] action',<sup>1</sup> and as such gathers the Church as the body of Christ on earth and in history. He is 'the power in which Jesus Christ attests Himself, attests Himself effectively, creating in man response and obedience.'<sup>2</sup> Barth stresses that nothing more 'palpable' than this can be said of the 'how' of the Spirit's working,<sup>3</sup> since what we need to know is that we belong to Christ and He to us. It really happens that there is an 'actualising of [Christ's] history in other human histories',<sup>4</sup> but this is as certain and as puzzling as the blowing of the wind where it wills (Jn. 3: 8).

The being of the Church flows from the Holy Spirit. It is the form of Jesus Christ as He lives in men and they in Him, and therefore it consists in the activity of men as they are moved by the Spirit.

This self-communication of Jesus Christ through the Spirit gives men their own place in Christ. He brings them to live and to act in Himself. This is also true of the individuals who compose the Church. They have an active place in Jesus Christ.

When Barth comes to consider man's act of faith he describes the unique glory of it. It 'cannot be compared with any other [human activity] in spontaneity and native

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1. ibid., p. 648.

2. ibid., p. 649.

3. ibid., p. 649.

4. ibid., p. 649.



freedom.'<sup>1</sup> It cannot be dissolved into its object but has a definite dignity in relation to that object.<sup>2</sup> It does not create its object, but 'discovers' what is already there for believers and unbelievers alike.<sup>3</sup> Therefore faith leaves behind an abnormal and eccentric for a normal and central existence. Barth goes so far as to say that in it 'there takes place the constitution of the Christian subject.'<sup>4</sup>

All this is true because the object of faith is 'the living Jesus Christ Himself.'<sup>5</sup> He is a 'present person', the 'circle encircling...every man', and faith apprehends Him as such.<sup>6</sup>

Barth first describes faith as the activity of the Christian in relation to Christ. In faith, a man is no longer closed to Jesus Christ, but is open to Him and orientates himself on Him. The centre of his being is open to Christ, and therefore he has found 'the true centre of himself which is outside himself.'<sup>7</sup>

Faith is not only oriented on Christ: it also has its origin in Him.

We do not compromise its character as free act if we say that it has its origin in the very point in which it also originates. It is also...the work of Jesus Christ who is its object. (C.D. IV/1, p. 744)

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1. ibid., p. 741.
  2. ibid., p. 742.
  3. ibid., p. 742.
  4. ibid., p. 749.
  5. ibid., p. 743.
  6. ibid., p. 743.
  7. ibid., p. 744.

Sinful man has no basis or possibility for faith in himself,<sup>1</sup> but Jesus Christ makes faith necessary for him, since He makes his unbelief an impossibility and faith his only possibility. This is because in Jesus Christ the old man of unbelief is passed over and the new man of faith is placed in his stead. In the awakening power of the Holy Spirit this impossibility of doubt and the sole possibility of faith 'so confronts...a man that he does the only objective, real and ontological thing which he can do.... [He] chooses that for which he is already chosen,...faith.'<sup>2</sup> Faith is the only human act which is 'self-evident'.<sup>3</sup> He awakens and finds himself where he really is, i.e., 'in his father's house and on his mother's lap.'<sup>4</sup>

The decisive thing still remains to be said. In faith there is 'the constitution of the Christian subject.'<sup>5</sup> In it there 'takes place a new and particular being of man.'<sup>6</sup> Barth states precisely what he means:

the creaturely subject constituted in the being and work of Jesus Christ and awakened as such by the power of the Holy Spirit...is the individual Christian in the act of his personal faith. (C.D. IV/1, p. 751)

That is, Christ constitutes the Christian subject, but He does so only in the act of faith of a man enlightened by the Holy Spirit. It is important to note this, since Barth also holds that the being of all men is included in

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1. ibid., p. 746.

2. ibid., p. 748.

3. ibid., p. 748.

4. ibid., p. 748.

5. ibid., p. 749.

6. ibid., p. 749.

Christ apart from their act of faith in Him. Barth here indicates a special sense in which men become Christians, i.e., in faith as they are enlightened by the Spirit. Faith does not alter anything, but it does bring a man into active participation in the alteration of the human situation as it took place in Christ.

As a human act [faith] consists in definite acknowledgement, recognition and confession. As this human act it has no creative but only cognitive character. It does not alter anything. As a human act it is simply a confirmation of a change which has already taken place, the change in the whole human situation which took place...in Jesus Christ. But it obviously belongs to the alteration of the human situation which Christian faith can only confirm, that it does find this confirmation... - that there are individual Christian subjects.  
(C.D. IV/1, pp. 751-2)

God alone can alter the human situation and man can only confess and enter into that perfect act of God. Thus Barth describes the act of faith in terms of knowledge, the active knowledge of Anerkennen, Erkennen and Bekennen. The act of Jesus Christ is not complete without the act of the human subjects who were its objects. Their act is that of taking cognisance of His act. It is not because they believe but as they believe that 'they become and are Christians.'<sup>1</sup> Yet they do become Christians in this act and 'to this extent we cannot deny to the event of their faith a certain creative character.'<sup>2</sup>

How does faith acquire this 'creative character' 'which it can have only on the presupposition of what man himself does in it, but which on this presupposition it cannot derive

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1. ibid., p. 752.

2. ibid., p. 752.



from sinful man?'<sup>1</sup> Barth answers that Christ 'encircles' the sinner and 'proves Himself to be the stronger by the irresistible awakening power of the Holy Spirit':

In this strength and in this proof He calls him to faith. And in doing so He creates the presupposition on the basis of which the sinful man can and does believe. He introduces him as a new subject which is capable of and willing and ready for this act...Because the faith of the sinful man is directed on Him and effected by Him, the event of his faith is not merely cognitive as a human act, but it is also creative in character. The new being effective and revealed in it, the new creation, the new birth, - they are all the mystery of the One in whom he believes and whom he can acknowledge and recognise and confess in faith.  
(C.D. IV/1, p. 753)

'This creative mystery of Christian existence'<sup>2</sup> must be thought of in terms of the form of Jesus Christ as He confronts individual man, bringing each person to discover himself as the one loved by Him. Each person is uniquely himself and no other, and Christ confronts him in order to bring him to know that it was just for him that He died and rose. As sinful man comes to this active knowledge of Christ, as he takes hold of the astounding fact that 'I myself am just the subject for whom [Jesus Christ] is', he has 'the newness of being, the new creation, the new birth of the Christian.'<sup>3</sup>

Barth now turns to consider the free act in which the Christian comes into being. Christian faith (from this point of view) is 'the act of the Christian life...the most inward, central, decisive act of his heart.'<sup>4</sup>

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1. ibid., p. 752.

2. ibid., p. 753.

3. C.D. IV/1, p. 755.

4. ibid., p. 757.

Offence has been taken at Barth's view that Christian faith is primarily knowledge. Though it is argued in this study that when the Spirit calls a man to faith there is also an ontological alteration in his being, Barth is on good ground in giving only a limited creative role to the human act and also in insisting that Christian knowledge is active and, in this limited sense, creative knowledge. Since faith is knowledge of Christ it is also obedience and is the alteration of the whole man. Barth describes this knowledge under three related terms, Anerkennen, Erkennen and Bekennen. The astounding thing here is that acknowledgement precedes recognition: Christ reverses the usual order. If acknowledgement of Christ followed knowledge of Him, it would not be obedient knowledge, since the obedience would depend on the believer's knowledge and would therefore not be subject to Christ. Barth says: 'The recognition is certainly included in the acknowledgment but it can only follow it. Acknowledging is a taking cognisance which is obedient and compliant.'<sup>1</sup>

Christian faith is also recognition. The obedience implied in acknowledgement of Christ is not blind. It has form because Jesus Christ has form. The knowledge present in this recognition of Christ cannot be abstract knowledge since Christian faith is knowledge of the One who gave Himself for him. The Christian also has real and not abstract knowledge of himself:

...if [faith] is an active recognition - a recognition in the full sense of this important word - then

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1. ibid., p. 758.

necessarily it reaches out from that knowledge to awareness, the self-understanding and self-apprehension, of the whole man, thus becoming an action and decision of the whole man. What does it mean when I know that... Jesus Christ is for me...?

...From this knowledge, from the recognition characterised by this knowledge, does there not necessarily follow a total disturbance of my being, a radical decision in relation to my situation vis à vis myself and the world? Does not this recognition...necessarily take on the form of a free act which is characterised as a basic act by the fact that it is - we must not say only, but just-the act of my heart. (C.D. IV/1, pp. 766-7)

In emphasising this radical disturbance Barth first notes a 'danger' in what he has said. Does not this talk of a 'total disturbance' approximate to the existentialists' absolute crisis or the Roman repetition of Calvary? Barth replies:

We have referred to a total but not absolute disturbance, a radical but not an eschatological decision, a free act of man...grounded in the act of God, but not the act of God itself and as such....We are speaking of the most important penultimate things, not of ultimate things. (C.D. IV/1, p. 767)

Barth distinguishes his position completely from any idea of a repetition in the act of faith of what took place eph' hapax in Jesus Christ. 'The real representation (repraesentio) of the history of Jesus Christ is that which He Himself accomplishes in the work of His Holy Spirit when He makes Himself the object and origin of faith.'<sup>1</sup> Existentialist theology disregards this:

What is Bultmann's conception but an existentialist translation of the sacramentalist teaching of the Roman Church, according to which, at the climax of the mass, with the transubstantiation of the elements... there is a "bloodless repetition" of the sacrifice of Christ on Golgotha? (C.D. IV/1, p. 767)

Barth stands by his thesis that faith is 'the free act of man'. 'If this is secure we cannot speak too strongly of

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1. C.D. IV/1, p. 767.



what takes place in it as the recognition and apprehension of Jesus Christ, as the subjective realisation of the promise.<sup>1</sup>

If Christian faith is acknowledgement and recognition of Christ, it must also be confession. A Christian would deceive himself as to his being in Christ if he did not confess Christ. Confession is the free act of man in which he shows concretely his thankfulness to Christ. He cannot respond to Christ without telling others that Christ has died for all men and therefore not only for him but also for them.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Work of the Spirit in the Act of Faith

It should be clear from the foregoing discussion that Barth distinguishes the act of God in the Spirit from the act of man which is called forth by it. God's work alone is creative in the full sense; man's act of faith is creative in only a very limited sense. On this ground he accords man's act of faith only penultimate seriousness and not the full eschatological seriousness which is proper to God's act.

In maintaining this Barth follows through one of the major theses of the Dogmatics, and there can be little doubt that he is on good Biblical ground. Nevertheless it must be asked whether the Holy Spirit does not exercise a greater creative role than Barth allows in the act of faith which He calls into being. If the Holy Spirit is equal God with the Son, and the Spirit by whom, with the Word, the world was

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1. ibid., p. 769.

2. ibid., p. 779.

created, does He not recreate man when He creates faith in him through the Word? Does not the Holy Spirit bring about an ontological alteration in the men who come to faith?

To ask these questions is not to suggest that man's act of faith alters anything, but it is to suggest that coincident with the act of faith the Holy Spirit accomplishes an ontological alteration in man. It is to suggest that Barth undervalues the creative power of the Spirit.

Barth is reluctant to accord this ontological role to the Spirit because he believes that the ontological condition of all men was altered by Christ on the cross and in the resurrection. The work of the Spirit of Christ can therefore be only that of calling men - of awakening, enlightening and empowering them - actively to know and to make use of what is already true of them in Christ.

It has been the constant argument of this study that Barth is correct to locate the ontological turning of the human condition in the death and resurrection of the incarnate One. To think otherwise would mean a retreat into the work-righteousness of giving man a part in his salvation, even if only a minimal part. H. Bouillard<sup>1</sup> and C. O'Grady<sup>2</sup> have reproached Barth for giving man's faith no saving role, and while their criticism is acceptable insofar as it means that man is not saved apart from faith, they seem to suggest that faith is something which must be added to Christ's work. C. Brown<sup>3</sup> also has difficulty in

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1. H. Bouillard, Karl Barth, Première Partie (Aubier, Paris, 1957), pp. 77-9.

2. C. O'Grady, The Church in Catholic Theology (G. Chapman, London, 1969), pp. 249-50.

3. C. Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message (Tyndale, London, 1967), pp. 135-7.

witnessing to the necessity of faith without making it something addition to Christ's perfect work. Yet it remains true that Barth's statement falls short of the Pauline and Lutheran insistence that it is in faith that a man is justified. There is a riddle here: how can Jesus Christ be the ontological alteration of the human situation and yet it still be the case that individual men are justified only by faith? The riddle is resolved in the mystery of the Spirit.

Jesus Christ is Himself the ontological conversion and salvation of man, but He does not come generally to men: He comes in the particularity of the Spirit. In His Spirit He shares with a particular man the salvation which is in Him and also the faith in which He won that salvation. In the language of McLeod Campbell, the faith in His Father by which He exercised His vicarious repentance is given to us through His Spirit. It is only as He thus shares His faith in the Father with us that we share in His salvation, i.e., the salvation which consists in the favour of the Father.

A slight but significant correction of Barth's view of the seriousness of faith follows from this. Barth holds it to be of penultimate, not ultimate, importance: it is man's act not God's. But if the Spirit performs the creative role of baptising the believer into Christ, the act of God and the act of man coincide in such a way that man's act of faith is inseparably linked with his recreation into the eschatological new creation in Christ. Man's act of faith does not itself alter anything, but it coincides with the act of the Spirit which alters his ontological standing and which is of ultimate importance.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE SANCTIFICATION OF MAN

Man's turning to God could not be termed a 'turning' unless it involved the will to cease to move in one direction and the will and energy to move in another. In his chapter on 'The Sanctification of Man', Barth addresses himself to this aspect of conversion. He thinks of it as an 'about turn', as freedom as opposed to bondage of the will, and as energy as opposed to sloth. In this chapter it will be asked whether Barth does not underestimate the radical effect which Christ has on those who trust in Him. Although Barth cannot be called 'Christomonist', there are some aspects of his doctrine of sanctification that are not entirely free of this danger. If Christ loves us as Himself, the goal of His being in His act is nothing less than to make us as He is, and Barth's language about the 'smallness', 'pettiness' and 'weakness' of our turning to God, however accurate it may be in describing the conversion of many Christians, falls far short of an accurate description of what He can and does do with us sinners.

The divine act of atonement consisted not only in the self-humbling of God, but also, grounded in that act of majesty, in the exaltation of man. Man has his being in Jesus Christ, and therefore man's being in Him includes not only his justification but also, grounded on it, his sanctification. God is not content simply to turn to man: He also turns man to Himself.<sup>1</sup>

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1. C.D. IV/2, pp. 499, 503.

Of the many terms which may be used to express this turning of man,<sup>1</sup> Barth chooses that of sanctification, since it points most clearly to the Holy One, the Saint, the One whose holy work is to make others holy. Barth says that God alone is 'originally and properly holy',<sup>2</sup> meaning by this not that there are not other holy ones and saints, but that He creates holiness in others.

The discussion of man's sanctification cannot be based on the sinner himself. The sole basis of his sanctification is the Holy One Himself. Yet Barth does begin with what takes place here below with man, starting with the astounding fact, on which the Bible counts, that there is a holy people in the world. We may speak so confidently of this holy people of God only because of the prior reality of the Holy One Himself, yet, simply because of Him, we must speak of and count on the existence of saints here on earth.

This is to anticipate Barth's discussion of the conversion of individual men and women. Barth first notes that the conversion which has come to all men de jure has in fact come upon only a limited number of men.<sup>3</sup> This conversion is intended for all men, and 'this special people of special men...[are] marked off from all others because

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1. Other terms which Barth mentions are: regeneration, renewal, conversion, penitence and discipleship, ibid., p. 500.

2. ibid., p. 500.

3. ibid., p. 511.

they are set aside by God'<sup>1</sup> in order that they may make 'a provisional offering of the thankfulness for which the whole world is ordained.'<sup>2</sup> This special people is made holy by the Holy One. He 'is the active Subject of their sanctification.'<sup>3</sup> He is unique, absolutely superior to them, and yet this holiness consists in His superiority to bridge the distance between Himself and sinners, and in so doing mercifully to create saints 'in reflection of His holiness.'<sup>4</sup> Barth marvels that sinners should be called saints. We are, he observes, not yet saints, but even although we are only a 'copy' and 'reflection' of His holiness,<sup>5</sup> God has crossed the gulf and has created a new existence for us. We are therefore not improperly called saints.

Who are and where are these people called saints? Barth replies: 'We shall certainly speak of them, but we are well advised not to speak of them too quickly or too directly.'<sup>6</sup> Barth's reason for this is not without ambiguity. He says:

...if, as the Subject of this occurrence in the course of which there arises the existence of saints, God alone is originally and properly holy, this necessarily means that even human holiness, as the new form of the existence of the covenant-partner of this God, cannot originally and properly be that of many, but only of the one man who on the human level is marked off from all others (even the holy people

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1. ibid., p. 511.

2. ibid., p. 499.

3. ibid., p. 513.

4. ibid., p. 513.

5. ibid., p. 514.

6. ibid., p. 514.



and its members) as sanctified by God, and therefore as the Holy One. (C.D. IV/2, p. 514)

God and Jesus Christ are alone originally holy, but is it true to say that They alone are properly holy? Granted that men are sinners, and that the holiness they have originates solely in God, does not God's holy coming to men recreate them as properly holy? Barth makes his point as he does because he wishes to insist that men are holy only as they participate in Christ, but surely it must be said that Christ's action is so radical that in Him men are properly holy. Barth goes on to amplify his point.

The sanctification of man which has taken place in this One is their sanctification. But originally and properly it is the sanctification of Him and not of them. Their sanctification is originally and properly His and not theirs. (C.D. IV/2, p. 514)

Again, this is expressed ambiguously, suggesting that our sanctification is less real than Christ's. Barth intends to stress that Christ alone sanctifies us and that our holiness is His action, but, precisely because this is true, it must be said that His holiness is also ours. All that He has is ours. Barth comes very close to saying this:

We look into the void if...we do not fix our gaze steadfastly on this centre as the place where alone [sanctification] is a direct event, reaching out with the same reality (but only in virtue of this centre) to all the other places.  
(C.D. IV/2, p. 515)

If Christ's holiness reaches out to the circumference 'with the same reality' as it exists at the centre, should not Barth agree that those who participate in Him are properly holy? They are born of His Spirit and therefore have His nature.<sup>1</sup>

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1. I Jn. 3: 9.

This may seem to be no more than a mere quibble, yet Barth hesitates to ascribe to Christians the holiness which is theirs according to the New Testament. It is not that Christians have any holiness apart from Christ, but that Christ makes their participation in Him so radical that they are holy as He is holy.

Barth's fundamental thesis about sanctification is participatio Christi: 'our sanctification consists in our participation in His sanctification as grounded in the efficacy and revelation of the grace of Jesus Christ.'<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ was sanctified for all men, but how does the de jure sanctification of all men in Him become factually true? Barth says that it is a matter of Christ's self-interpretation to men, so that they come to 're-interpret' themselves in the light of their being in Christ. If He lives, this royal man, and if He does so as Lord, their Lord, this means even for their self-understanding that they are His, the people of His possession.<sup>2</sup> Through the Holy Spirit, He places them under His direction and 'creates saints.'<sup>3</sup>

Barth's description of this impartation from Christ to the Christian begins with man and works upward.<sup>4</sup> We are indeed slothful sinners, and our sanctification does not mitigate but confirms this fact. Christians are distinguished

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1. ibid., p. 517.

2. ibid., p. 521.

3. ibid., p. 523.

4. ibid., p. 523.

from other sinners by the fact that they are 'disturbed',<sup>1</sup> sinners to whose sin an 'overwhelming' limit has been set by the breaking in of the powerful divine direction.<sup>2</sup> We are called - not merely corrected but also instructed - and live our sanctification de facto as we look to Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Even as we lazy sinners lift ourselves up and follow Him we are in need of forgiveness, but the glorious fact is that we actually do rise up and obey Him. Although this rising up is similar to all our other acts, it is different from them to the extent that the 'spontaneity with which [man] expresses himself in it' arises not from his heart but originates in the direction which Jesus Christ gives him.<sup>4</sup> He executes it as the answer to a call which comes from his Lord, and therefore, although he has 'no means to hand which are not common to all men'

it is absolutely dissimilar in the fact that it is his correspondence to the life-movement of his Lord as produced, not by his own caprice, but by the will and touch and address and creation and gift of this Lord. Those who receive Him, who are given the power to become children of God, who believe in His Name, are born not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. Their action is nourished by the mystery of the life-giving Spirit by whom the Lord has united these sinful human creatures to Himself. Their action attests this mystery, and therefore the One who has united them to Himself.

(C.D. IV/2, p. 529)

Because this direction comes from the Lord, it is the real alteration of man's being.<sup>5</sup> In His kingly work, Jesus draws men to Himself, and man's sloth no longer reigns. More

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1. ibid., p. 524.

2. ibid., p. 526.

3. ibid., p. 527.

4. ibid., p. 528.

5. ibid., p. 529.

than this, as Jesus brings men to participate in Himself, He makes them free. This sovereign freedom is not guaranteed by the use they make of it. Saints are still 'inclined by nature to hate God and [their] neighbours,' but the fact is that Christ has set them free for the freedom which they have in Him. Barth says:

It is true that in its original and proper form they have the freedom, not in themselves, but in the One who is above. But called by Him to fellowship with Himself, placed in it, united with Him by His Holy Spirit, they are free here and now in correspondence to His kingly rule at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. (C.D. IV/2, p. 533)

Formally, man's sanctification consists in looking to Jesus and freedom; its substance comes in Jesus' summons to discipleship, the command which is 'the form of the grace which comes concretely to man.'<sup>1</sup>

Barth makes four points about this call. First, Jesus' call to discipleship is the particular form of the command by which Jesus reveals Himself to man and claims him wholly for Himself.<sup>2</sup> Grace has the form of law,<sup>3</sup> since Christ reveals to men the freedom they have in Him and also commands them to make use of it. Second, the call to discipleship binds a man to the One who calls.<sup>4</sup> The living Jesus calls as the One who has 'fulfilled the promise of God' and therefore as the One who is to be trusted and obeyed.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, third, the call to discipleship is always the 'summons to take in faith...a definite first step.'<sup>6</sup> It must be an act

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1. ibid., p. 535.

2. ibid., p. 534.

3. Cf. K. Barth, Gospel and Law, trans. J.S. McNab (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1959), pp. 14ff.

4. C.D. IV/2, p. 536.

5. ibid., pp. 536-7.

6. ibid., p. 538.



in which a man denies himself and simply obeys Jesus, doing neither ~~more~~ nor less than He asks. It is specific, definite, concrete obedience, the one thing he is free to do. Finally, the call to discipleship involves a definite break with himself<sup>1</sup> and all the 'gods' of family, honour, possessions, etc., which are really forms of self-concern. Jesus is the Conqueror of these powers and, as we follow Him, we necessarily witness to this fact.<sup>2</sup> The disciple attests the victory of God through his obedience to the Victor. He witnesses to a victory already won, and therefore in this witness the Church is militant: it attests in action the revolution of God against the 'gods' of both Christians and the world.

This revolution of God finds its expression in the Christian's awakening to conversion. As conversion is the subject of this study, this sub-section of the Dogmatics will be discussed in some detail. It is well to recall that Barth holds that God has freely turned to man and that in the strength of this turning and on its basis man has turned to God. This twofold turning is actual in the person of Jesus Christ. In the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ communicates Himself to other men, and hence they are freed to participate in His turning to God. As they hear His gospel, they are both freed and commanded to turn in gratitude to God.

Barth counts on the fact of the actual turning of men to God. According to him, there can be no legitimate doubt

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1. ibid., p. 543.

2. ibid., p. 544.

that men turn to God because God has already turned to us. As surely as God has turned to man, so surely will it be found that men turn to Him.<sup>1</sup>

Barth enquires concerning the origin and basis of this conversion. It is only as man looks to Jesus, the author and the finisher of faith, that he finds himself in the movement of conversion. Conversion must be thought of as fellowship with Jesus.<sup>2</sup> It may be described under several headings - awakening, the movement of the whole man in turning, renewal, and a total falling out with oneself as sinner. Each of these four headings refer to the same reality, but gives a closer examination of it than the preceding heading. The more exactly Barth looks at the human reality of conversion, the more he is driven to look at the source of its reality. Indeed, his entire discussion of conversion moves toward an affirmation of the presupposition of everything said within it, i.e., man's participation in Christ. Fellowship with Christ is fundamentally participation in Him.

This manner of understanding the phenomenon of conversion leads to greater, not smaller, insight into the practical sphere. In the experience of conversion, men feel that they begin with a hesitant but increasing fellowship with Jesus. They feel that this sense of His presence will eventually culminate in their participation in Him. They believe that the goal of their conversion is union with Christ. This conception, natural though it is, depends on emotions, and

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1. ibid., p. 558.

2. ibid., p. 553.

obscures the solid ground on which conversion rests. We can begin to convert to God only because we already participate in Christ. Union with Christ is the starting-point, not the goal, of conversion. When feelings shape the conception of conversion, conversion seems to be an achievement which we must complete before we are fully participant in Christ, but when we look to Christ, who is the source of conversion, we realise that from beginning to end conversion is the gift of participation in Christ.

Barth's account of conversion parallels his discussion of the event of man's vocation (see Chapter XII). There Barth speaks first of fellowship with Jesus, then of His calling men into discipleship, next of communion with Him and finally of union with Him. Each of these headings implies greater intimacy with Christ, describing as they do more accurately what vocation means. But the final stage, union, is the presupposition of the preceding stages. Union with Christ is the very reality and possibility of fellowship, discipleship and communion. It is not the culmination of fellowship, but its ontological ground.<sup>1</sup>

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1. It has been the constant argument of this study that, although all men are created by Christ, they are not in Christ in the New Testament sense apart from their actual living in Him. In Chapter III (pp. 141-5) it was argued that Barth is not correct to describe the awakening which takes place in conversion as a transition from one kind of being in Christ to another. This means that Barth's account of the awakening to conversion as described in this chapter must be modified, but this modification will not be made until the following chapter where Barth's account of union with Christ will be discussed at some length. Without compromising Barth's central affirmation that the sinner cannot turn to God apart from participation in Christ, it is hoped to stress the grace in which Christ, as the living Way from alienation to union, awakens sinners to Himself as the One in whom all they need is given to them, (Contd.)

Because Barth makes union with Christ and participation in Him the basis of man's actual turning to God, he makes it clear that it is not something which we bring to Christ. It is what He gives us. This does not mean the exclusion of activity on our part, but the inauguration of it. Barth goes so far as to say that 'man lifts himself up,'<sup>1</sup> emphasising man's activity. Far from being Pelagian at this point, he is following out the implications of his doctrine of incarnation,<sup>2</sup> where he argues that God's grace creates the freedom for man to be man. It is in the true Son of God that we are freed to elevate ourselves as sons of God. Even more than in creation, in recreation God establishes man's 'autonomy' as His children.

This standing up may be described under the heading awakening.<sup>3</sup> Men rouse themselves out of their sloth and use their energy. This metaphor, however, is inadequate to describe what is really happening here, since it is a rising 'from the sleep of death.'<sup>4</sup> So fearsome is this sleep that only a new act of God can wake up the sinner.<sup>5</sup> This act takes place according to the 'law of divine action.'<sup>6</sup> This

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Contd.) and so awakens them to participate in Him by faith. Union with Christ is still the ontological ground of conversion, but this union is always a living union, and therefore something which men have only as they are renewed actually to live what is theirs in Christ.

1. ibid., p. 553.

2. C.D. I/2, 15: 'The Mystery of Revelation', and 18: 'The Life of the Children of God.'

3. C.D. IV/2, p. 554.

4. ibid., p. 555.

5. ibid., p. 556.

6. ibid., p. 556.



law is the manner of the being together of God and man such that God's ordinance has the dynamic authority to call the creature into freedom. This awakening happens within 'the context and under the conditions of human freedom.'<sup>1</sup> God takes man seriously as man, doing him no violence, and meeting him in an initiative which jolts him into action as true man. As God acts according to this law, 'the creaturely is made serviceable to the divine and does actually serve it.'<sup>2</sup>

These words exactly parallel Barth's account of Christ's humanity as considered in relation to the communicatio operationum. In Christ, the human has the dignity of acting with the divine, serving and revealing it.<sup>3</sup> This happens according to the power of the divine initiative. Similarly, the divine initiative brings it about that we men actually serve Him. The point to be noted here is that Barth allows our humanity to correspond to Christ's humanity. We genuinely participate in Him. Barth also speaks of conversion as 'mystery and miracle', closely recalling his discussion of Christmas, arguably to focal point of the entire Dogmatics: 'this mystery and miracle is a subordinate moment in the act of majesty in which the Word became flesh and Jesus Christ arose from the dead.'<sup>4</sup> Conversion is an act of majesty because in it God acts in the majesty proper to Him and yet also in humility, so that He takes up

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1. ibid., p. 556.

2. ibid., p. 557.

3. ibid., p. 116.

4. ibid., p. 557.

sinful human nature and converts it to Himself without violating it. It is a subordinate moment because originally conversion took place in Christ's incarnate life and resurrection. Strangely, however, Barth makes no mention of the Spirit or of Pentecost.

Conversion must be further described as a turning around from facing away from God to 'going in the opposite direction' towards Him.<sup>1</sup> No more radical change is possible, since it is a new life, not the renovation of the old. Yet the Bible does not present us with men whose turning to God is a completed matter; rather, we are 'caught up in the movement of conversion.'<sup>2</sup> Man is awakened to conversion not converted. No man is converted in the sense that he is not in daily and hourly need of turning to God.

Conversion is also the renewal of the whole man.<sup>3</sup> Calvin rightly spoke of a new heart and of being born from above. Jeremiah's prophecy of man's new heart is here fulfilled. Man's whole life is placed on a new basis. Previously his life had no axis on which to turn, now it is established on such an axis. The image of the axis illustrates that (a) man's whole life is claimed and (b) that the turning is a movement in which man is continually engaged.

Man's entire life is claimed for conversion - totally

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1. ibid., p. 560.

2. ibid., p. 560.

3. ibid., pp. 560-3.

claimed. The claim in no way depends on man's willingness, but wholly on God who is totally for man. Every aspect of man's life is touched: his relationship with his brother;<sup>1</sup> both his disposition and his acts;<sup>2</sup> his being called out of a private life which was an end in itself to a life of service;<sup>3</sup> and his whole time.<sup>4</sup> The claiming of man's time is particularly significant in view of the avoidance of it in the Roman and the Pietist understandings of repentance. The Roman confessional treats repentance as repeatable, but in fact repentance cannot be repeated because it is already established and given in Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> Properly, only one course is legitimate and possible, that of proceeding forward on the basis of the irrevocable repentance which God has laid down as the foundation on which all else depends. The content of repentance is not exhausted in momentary acts of repentance, but is filled out in a life of repentance. The Pietist idea of a specific moment of repentance similarly avoids the claiming of man's whole time, since it makes repentance less than the engagement of one's whole life in conversion.

To be claimed by God for repentance involves a total falling out with oneself.<sup>6</sup> The utter seriousness of this mortificatio can be grasped only when it is seen that its purpose is vivificatio. The teleology of this radical dispute with ourselves is the new man, the fulfilment of our

1. ibid., pp. 563-4.

2. ibid., pp. 564-5.

3. ibid., pp. 565-6.

4. ibid., pp. 566-70.

5. ibid., pp. 568-9.

6. ibid., p. 570 (Auseinandersetzung).

liberation.

Clearly, such a total dispute with oneself can only originate above man himself - man could not enter into such a complete falling out with himself from within himself.

Barth therefore enquires concerning its origin.

First, the image of the axis is too mechanistic to convey the personal character of this dispute and turning.<sup>1</sup> Barth speaks directly of what happens. Man is not 'betrayed'<sup>2</sup> into turning, nor is he forced into it by being acted upon from above. If this were so, man would encounter an usurping demon and not the Spirit of Christ. It is certainly true that in conversion man is subject to omnipotence, and even to compulsion, but it is the omnipotence of God who acts within the human situation, and it is the compulsion which grants the ability to use the freedom which it bestows. God's commandment gives the permission, ability and freedom to obey. Despite his sloth, man is made free. In exercising this freedom, man fulfills his conversion.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the falling out with oneself which originates above man is acted out in man himself.

Second, the origin of this freedom is the truth that God is for man and because of this man may be and is for God.<sup>4</sup> This is the gospel, and it can command with authority because it gives good news. The law is powerless to effect mortificatio, let alone vivificatio.

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1. ibid., p. 578.

2. ibid., p. 578.

3. ibid., p. 579.

4. ibid., p. 579.



Third, the truth of the gospel is at work here. Barth notes: 'the event of revelation which has been our starting point in all these discussions must be merely the manifestation of a real event which takes place with incontestable objectivity.'<sup>1</sup> This is the Christ event. Jesus Christ is the climax in whom man's turning to God is primarily real. In Him it is 'properly, primarily and comprehensively real... that God (vere Deus) is for man and man (vere homo) is for God.'<sup>2</sup> He is not for Himself but for us men and therefore in Him 'the divine summons to halt and to advance breaks into the life of man.'<sup>3</sup> In Him man's radical falling out with himself 'is an event which is effective and valid for many....' He is the Head engaged in conversion for the members.<sup>4</sup>

These three points concern 'the power which sets and keeps [man in the engagement with his conversion]...as his falling out with himself.'<sup>5</sup> They indicate that conversion originates and is carried through in participation in Christ.

If we look honestly at ourselves we see little evidence of this movement of conversion, but if we look to Jesus Christ, everything becomes clear.

Everything is simple, true and clear when these statements [about conversion] are referred directly to Jesus Christ, and only indirectly, as fulfilled and effectively realised in Him, to ourselves.

(C.D. IV/2, p. 583)

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1. ibid., p. 581.

2. ibid., p. 582.

3. ibid., p. 582.

4. ibid., p. 582.

5. ibid., p. 577.

The human subject is not forgotten, however, since the words: 'fulfilled and effectively realised in Him' convey the meaning that what Jesus Christ has, He has for us. He is the Head, we the members. '...by His Holy Spirit He has clothed us with that which properly He alone is and has;... He allows us to have a share in that which belongs to Him.'<sup>1</sup> How seriously Barth means this can be seen from the following remarkable passage:

It is in His conversion that we are engaged. It is in His birth, from above, the mystery and miracle of Christmas, that we are born again. It is in His baptism in Jordan that we are baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire. It is in His death on the cross that we are dead as old men, and in His resurrection in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea that we are risen as new men. Who of us then, in relation to our own conversion or that of others, can seriously know any other terminus for this event than the day of Golgotha, in which He accomplished in our place and for us all the turning and transforming of the human situation, and as He did so was crowned as the royal man He was, our Lord? (C.D. IV/2, p. 583)

What remains for us? Jesus Christ. There remains for us Jesus Christ, faith in Him, 'our little moments' which reflect Him, and in which we know that we are borne along by His movements as those 'who are His to love Him as the One who is ours - always wholly and exclusively in response to the fact that He first loved us.'<sup>2</sup>

This glorious account of our conversion in Christ does, however, raise a serious question. Is not Jesus Christ and the conversion of man in Him ours without reservation? Can we then be content with Barth's talk of our 'little conversion'? Does not this minimising of our conversion in Him in fact detract from the perfection of the conversion in

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1. ibid., p. 583.

2. ibid., p. 584.

Him? Does it not detract from the Christ Barth seeks to exalt?

Only a brief glance at the rest of Barth's account of man's sanctification is needed here before taking up the problem of its adequacy for the subject of this study. Barth continues his theme of participatio Christi into the two areas of man's work and his cross bearing. He shows that in both spheres man has definite tasks of his own to do. Participatio Christi does not mean that Christ works and therefore we do not. Rather, Christ liberates us for work. Our good works are done in obedience to Him, in His strength and are acts of thanksgiving to Him, yet God himself praises us for them.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Christian's suffering is his own and not Christ's. He carries his own cross, though he does so solely in the strength of Christ's bearing His cross for our sake. In this dissimilarity and yet similarity to Christ, the Christian's suffering attains a genuine dignity.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the life into which the Christian enters as he is engaged in conversion is one in which Christ gives him a place of his own for his own correspondence to Him.

This correspondence of the Christian to Christ is a major theme in Barth's section on 'The Holy Spirit and Christian Love.' Some observations about this section will be helpful before taking up an assessment of Barth's understanding of man's conversion. Barth argues that it is right and proper to speak of the Christian's love for God and his neighbour, and that this should be understood as

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1. ibid., pp. 584-98.

2. ibid., pp. 598-613.

free self-giving.<sup>1</sup> It is self-giving freed from the will to use others for one's own pleasure and ends. It has its basis in God's overflowing and self-giving love.<sup>2</sup> God genuinely gives Himself for our good. God does not seek Himself when He seeks man, but man.<sup>3</sup> This love of God for man is (a) free, electing love,<sup>4</sup> (b) chastening, purifying love<sup>5</sup> and, most important for the present study, (c) creative love.<sup>6</sup> In this love of God in the Spirit, man genuinely corresponds to God's self-giving to him. Man's act of love is thus his free love of God. Since it takes place in the Spirit it is his own act.

How inconceivable is this simple fact - that to the eternal love which is in God...there corresponds the fact that man may love God. Is not the mystery of reconciliation almost greater on this human side... than it is on the divine?...by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit...small and sinful man may love the great and holy God, responding to the divine self-offering with his own....As truly as God loves us we may love Him in return....It is no less a miracle than the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ or His bodily resurrection from the dead. Only if we measure it by the miracle of Epiphany, which is its basis and original, can we comprehend the mystery by which the act of love is surrounded as the love of man for God.  
(C.D. IV/2, p. 791)

Such is the glorious mystery of man's love for God! Through the Holy Spirit, our turning to God is an analogy of God's turning to us.

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1. ibid., p. 730.

2. ibid., pp. 757, 760.

3. ibid., p. 750.

4. ibid., pp. 766-71.

5. ibid., pp. 771-76.

6. ibid., pp. 776-83.



Assessment of Barth's Account of Participatio Christi in relation to Man's Turning to God

Barth's conception of man's turning to God is founded on his doctrine of participatio Christi. The conversion of man to God which took place in Christ is communicated by His Spirit to other men. The great gain for theology which this doctrine represents may be summarised in the following points.

1. Jesus Christ is Himself man's sanctification. All that man needs for his sanctification is complete in Him. Further, it is already complete in Him. Christ does not become our sanctification as we turn to Him and grow in holiness. We are already sanctified in Him, and we participate in what is already perfected.<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ has been made our sanctification (I Cor. 1: 30: egenēthē).

2. (a) In sanctification no less than in justification the sinner receives everything from God. The sinner does not sanctify himself any more than he justifies himself. God does not need his repentance before He can extend His holiness to him. On the contrary, it is God's holiness which enables him to repent and to take his first (and last) steps in sanctification. Yet man is not passive in sanctification. God brings the sinner to active repentance. Through the Holy Spirit he is awakened actively to engage

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1. This doctrine is most important for theology and the Church since it indicates the perfect adequacy of Christ over against certain tendencies in the Church to say that something (e.g. morality) must be added to Christ in sanctification. It takes away the anxiety a Christian may feel as to his ability to serve God.

in the turning to God which is laid up for him in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

(b) God loves the sinner, and therefore He desires that he should turn from his wickedness and live. Repentance is repentance unto life. Mortification does not exist for its own sake, but has its purpose and its goal in renewal. Because this is so, the man engaged in conversion has no further use for his sins - not even to mourn over them. His entire repentance is directed toward life, righteousness and God.<sup>2</sup>

(c) Conversion is thus a dynamic, radical falling out with oneself. It is an about face, a 180° turn from dead works to serving the living God. It is not something which

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1. In both Roman catholicism and Evangelical protestantism there is a strong tendency to say that justification is by Christ alone but that the Christian must sanctify Himself. The doctrine of the Spirit indicates that sanctification comes entirely from Christ and that the Christian is not inactive in it. When this is realised there can be no talk of self-sanctification or sanctification by works. The Scots Confession makes it particularly clear that man has no merit in sanctification: 'we willingly spoil ourselves of all honour and glory of our own creation and redemption, as we do of our regeneration and sanctification.' (Art. XII). Knox could argue this so strongly because he saw sanctification issuing solely from our living in the 'Spirit of the Lord Jesus.' However, to the extent that this is understood, Hans Küng's observations about man's activity in his sanctification are proper and indeed necessary: 'There is no self-justification of man, but there is a "self-sanctification". It is God in Jesus Christ who sanctifies men through His Holy Spirit. But the greatest marvel of God's pure grace is that in the working out of God-given sanctification, man - not by himself, but he himself - may sanctify himself.' Justification, trans. T. Collins, E. Tolk, O. Grandskou (Burns and Oates, London, 1966), p. 300.
  2. Barth points out that Calvin did not make it sufficiently clear that mortification is not an end in itself, but has as its goal renewal. The result was that repentance became a gloomy affair, and not a joyful turning to life. C.D. IV/2, pp. 580-1.

may ever be regarded as completed, but an activity in which the Christian is engaged all his days. He is not converted, but awakened to conversion. In this movement, the whole Christ is claiming his life totally for Himself, and his life rests on the unrepeatable and complete foundation of repentance laid down by Christ.<sup>1</sup>

3. This claiming of man's whole life for conversion is an indubitable fact of experience, but (sadly) our lives show little evidence of it, and we are obliged to speak of our 'little' conversion. The statements about conversion are unambiguous only when referred to Christ,<sup>2</sup> since it is 'in His conversion that we are engaged.' But, for just this reason, the more we look away from ourselves and look to Him, the greater our conversion will be. For, 'as truly as God loves us, we may love Him in return.'

The liberation which this position means for theology may be suggested in Barth's own words:

It has not always been taken with sufficient seriousness that [Jesus Christ] took our place and acted for us, not merely as the Son of God who established God's right and our own..., but also as the Son of Man who was sanctified, who sanctified Himself. Far too often the matter has been conceived and represented as though His humiliation to death...for our justification...were His own act, but our exaltation to fellowship with God as the corresponding counter-movement, and therefore our sanctification, were left to us, to be accomplished by us. "All this I did for thee; What wilt thou do for me?" The New Testament does not speak this way.... As we are not asked to justify ourselves, we are not asked to sanctify ourselves. Our sanctification

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1. Barth's doctrine here is a helpful corrective to the tendency in Evangelical protestantism to regard conversion as a completed state.
  2. Barth's teaching at this point may be criticised, but it is clear that he is resisting the Church's pride in regard to its own works and holiness, and insisting that it look only to Christ.



consists in our participation in His sanctification as grounded in the efficacy and revelation in the grace of Jesus Christ. (C.D. IV/2, pp. 518-9)

There can be no going back on this position, yet three questions must be asked as to the adequacy of Barth's doctrine fully to ground it.

1. To what extent in Barth is the sinner's conversion already present in Christ? What is the conversion in Christ in which we are engaged? Clearly, Christ does not turn from sin to righteousness, but it was argued above in Chapter VII that Christ converted human nature to God in that, from His birth and culminating on the cross and in the face of severe temptation, He presented our humanity without spot to God. The fallen human nature which He assumed He presented to God as fully holy. It has been noted that Barth gives this very little emphasis, and therefore it is difficult to see in Barth that there is in Christ a conversion of human nature as radical as the sinner needs. Barth does, as has been seen, give great emphasis to Christ's obedience and His bringing human nature into conformity with God, but the decisive thing is missing: the obedience as won in the face of temptation by faith and by the power of the Spirit. To the extent that this struggle and victory in our flesh through the Spirit is neglected in his theology, to that extent Barth is unable to show that there is in Christ the conversion of human nature which the sinner needs.

2. If Barth undervalues the struggle against sin in the conversion of human nature as it took place in Jesus Christ, does he not also undervalue the struggle against sin which takes place in the sinner's conversion? Christian



tradition points to the reality of the struggle which the sinner encounters as he comes to grips with his conversion. John Bunyan in his Pilgrim's Progress draws a vivid description of the conflicting currents in the experience of a man beginning on his Christian discipleship. Repentance is at first difficult and painful. It involves the abandonment of the life which the sinner loved and cherished. It means that he wills to leave his past behind and begins to will the will of God. It means hating what before he loved and loving what before he hated. A completely new motivation comes into operation: where before he loved himself and did everything for himself, he now loves God and seeks to do all things for God. He takes pleasure in the will of God. Formerly he did all things for his own safety, now he dares, denies and hates himself for God's sake. McLeod Campbell argues that before he was a God to himself, now God naturally takes the place in his heart which self did:

This is the condition of one who has repented, that without any effort - as the free working of his own mind - he gives to God that place which self occupied before. (Responsibility for the Gift of Eternal Life, p. 48)

Bernard of Clairvaux drew attention to the alteration of man's loving. According to him, a man first loves himself for his own sake, and then begins to love God for God's benefits towards him. From there he goes on to love God for God's own sake and finally he loves himself only for God's sake.<sup>1</sup> Bernard is not describing an ordo salutis, but rather the movement in which a man gives up self-love

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1. Bernard of Clairvaux, On Loving God, ed. H. Martin (S.C.M., London, 1959), Chap. 15.

for the love of God. Though this movement is joyful and grounded in God's love for him, it is accompanied by the pull to turn back. It is accomplished against temptation and requires the definite will to flee from evil and to embrace the will of God.

Barth does not ignore this dimension of conversion but he gives it very little consideration. The reader misses in the Dogmatics the element in conversion in which a man deliberately 'renounces' the devil, the world and the carnal desires of the flesh and binds himself 'obediently to keep God's holy will.'<sup>1</sup> Barth's incompleteness here - and it is no more than an incompleteness - may be traced back to his weak conception of Christ's holiness in our flesh. Because he speaks so little of Jesus' struggle for holiness in His flesh, he is unable to say much about the struggle for holiness in those who participate in Him. Unless the sinner sees and knows Jesus hungering and thirsting after righteousness, how can he similarly hunger and thirst? Unless he participates in the Jesus who hated sin and sorrowed over sinners, how can he hate his sin and lament his being a sinner? Unless he participates in the Jesus who, by faith and the Spirit of the Father, put sin behind Him and obeyed the Word of God, how can he turn from sin and, through faith and the same Spirit, hold to the Word?

3. Granted that our conversion is real only as we participate in Christ, and that it must be referred to Him, is it not true that because conversion has taken place in Him our conversion cannot be a 'small' thing but must be a great

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1. Anglican Book of Common Prayer, Order for Baptism.

thing? If it is a small thing, is not this because the conversion in Him which reaches out to us has been blocked? If He has converted human nature to God, and if through His Spirit every barrier between Him and us has been removed, does it not follow that our conversion must, in the proper course of things, be a deep, great and obvious happening?

In this context it must also be asked whether Barth is not mistaken in saying that 'in [Christ's] birth, from above, the mystery and miracle of Christmas,...we are born again.' In view of the argument of Chapter VII, it is not in His incarnation but in His resurrection that 'we have been born anew to a living hope' (I Pet. 1: 3). In His resurrection Christ communicates the conversion of human nature which He began in His birth and perfected on His cross. If it is clear that it is as this life-giving Spirit that He recreates us, all suggestion of Christomenism will be overcome, since it will be clear that he converts men only as He gives them what is His.

These questions amount to a plea for a stronger doctrine of the Spirit as the Spirit in whom all that is Christ's is ours. We have no conversion or holiness apart from participation in Christ, but through His Spirit He gives us an unreserved share in the holiness which is His. The only reason our conversion is small is that we do not receive the Spirit in all His fullness. Should we not, therefore, carry through with radical seriousness Barth's often repeated prayer: 'Veni Creator Spiritus'? If we do this, the logic of Barth's own position will lead us to the correction of his theology in which we speak not of our small conversion and

weak participation but of the greatness of the conversion which the Lord has wrought among us. We will be unable to rest content with a small conversion but will cry out for the Spirit and for a richer participation in Him in whom our conversion is already perfect.



CHAPTER XII  
THE VOCATION OF MAN

Barth's understanding of the vocation goes far beyond the common view that man is called to his salvation. Just as Jesus Christ does not exist for Himself, so the Christian is not called to salvation without being initiated into service. The Christian is turned from serving himself to serving the living God. Barth's account of vocation is particularly rich in insight into the dynamic, active character of the life into which the Christian is called.

Jesus Christ is the light of life, and all men are set in His light. This is true whether they will it or not. His light not only shines around the man of sin: it penetrates him and shines within him. This is the event of his calling, his klēsis.<sup>1</sup> Not all men are called. In fact, all men as such are uncalled.<sup>2</sup> Prior to his actual calling, man is called in Jesus Christ (cf. his justification and sanctification). Calling has its root in election,<sup>3</sup> and, as election was realised in the history of Jesus Christ, so is calling. Thus, a man's personal calling is his participation in the prior calling of all men as already actualised in the life of Jesus Christ. Though most men have not yet received their call in their life histories.

There is no man whose history is not decided in the history of Jesus Christ, in the sense that whatever may or may not take place in it whatever way will do so in relation to and according to the standard of the

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1. C.D. IV/3, p. 482.

2. ibid., p. 483.

3. ibid., p. 484.

fact that in Jesus Christ he, too, is justified, sanctified and called. (C.D. IV/3, p. 486.)

Jesus Christ has, therefore, altered the situation of every man. It is on this basis that a man's specific calling in the Holy Spirit comes to him.

Barth now proceeds to elucidate the actual event of vocation. Vocation is a specific action of God.<sup>1</sup> It is an act of Jesus Christ on earth and in time and is therefore different from every other act.<sup>2</sup> In the sphere of Christ's time and history, as He proceeds on His way to His goal, He sends out His creative call, and in it 'there comes into being that which was not but which was destined to be.'<sup>3</sup> Within His call, man's time is fulfilled and a new history begins - his salvation. His call is a spiritual event in the New Testament sense, an event which necessarily includes the external and the physical.<sup>4</sup> Since it is the call of the living Jesus Christ, it must not be conceived abstractly, nor must it be thought of as merely an inner event which bypasses the actual man.

The Holy Spirit is at work in this spiritual event, but everything depends on its being seen that He is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Unless it is recognised that the objective, living Jesus Christ is the acting Subject in this calling of specific men, there will be a temptation to regard the subjective experience of vocation as something man can control.<sup>5</sup>

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1. ibid., p. 497.

2. ibid., p. 497.

3. ibid., p. 500.

4. ibid., p. 500.

5. ibid., p. 504.

Barth now turns to the nature of the alteration<sup>1</sup> which happens as Jesus Christ encounters man. Here also, everything depends on seeing that it is the one and total Jesus Christ who encounters the whole man. He claims the whole man completely. There can be no steps to salvation, no ordo salutis.<sup>2</sup> Jesus is man's salvation, and the idea of steps required to appropriate this salvation questions the perfection of Jesus. Where man's entering into salvation is conceived of as taking place in a ladder of salvation, man's work inevitably begins to crowd Jesus out. In Barth's perceptive words, the call of Jesus is abstracted from Jesus Himself and

the relevant and important thing is no longer God's active dealing with man, but in isolation and independence the active dealing of man with God.

(C.D. IV/3, p. 507)

In our human perception, of course, the event of vocation is fragmentary,<sup>3</sup> but this in no way justifies a doctrinal concept of a progressive call, which necessarily gives sin a place and so relativises it and to that extent excuses it.<sup>4</sup> Against this Barth points out:

To say vocation is to speak of the one total address to man of the living Jesus Christ and therefore not of a mere part, a mere beginning, but of what takes place in this address in its unity and totality.

(C.D. IV/3, p. 507)

Thus, all the concepts legitimately relating to vocation apply not to a part or stage of vocation, but to the whole, speaking

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1. ibid., p. 504.

2. ibid., p. 505.

3. ibid., p. 507.

4. ibid., p. 508.

of it from a particular angle.<sup>1</sup>

This is true of the concept: 'illumination', which means that 'the light of life carries through its work in a particular man to its conclusion.'<sup>2</sup> It indicates that this particular man is enlightened, and that he can now see where before he was blind. It also indicates an advance from ignorance to knowledge, and in Barth's dynamic concept of Christian knowledge, this means a new creation.<sup>3</sup> 'In making Himself known, God acts on the whole man....Illumination and therefore vocation is the total alteration of the one whom it befalls.'<sup>4</sup>

The concept of 'awakening' belongs along-side that of illumination, and is often used in pietist circles in preference to it. It adds nothing material to the concept of illumination and is rarely used in the New Testament, but it does give strong emphasis to the contrast between the two states of man and the transition from the one to the other.<sup>5</sup>

Since Jesus Christ is the active Subject in vocation, some misconceptions must be cleared out of the way. The old distinction between vocatio immediata and vocatio mediata is uninstructive because in the New Testament Jesus Christ always calls a man immediately and directly.<sup>6</sup> Again, the distinction between vocatio externa and vocatio interna must be rejected because it divides where Jesus Christ does not.<sup>7</sup> More

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1. ibid., p. 508.

2. ibid., p. 508.

3. ibid., pp. 509-10.

4. ibid., p. 510.

5. ibid., p. 513.

6. ibid., pp. 514-6.

7. ibid., pp. 516-7.



instructive, however, is the distinction between vocatio unica and vocatio continua, provided that it is remembered that these belong together.<sup>1</sup> The one event of vocation is once and for all and 'yet also a sequence of new and further callings.'<sup>2</sup> The One who calls is faithful and wills to bring His work to completion. We cannot oppose those who speak of calling as a specific event at a specific time in a man's life, provided we see it only as a beginning. God begins His good work in order to complete it.<sup>3</sup>

The entire character of vocation is determined by the One who calls. If we recognise this, we will readily admit the ambiguous nature of our human side of this calling, but will also agree that the incomparability of Jesus Christ distinguishes His call from all other events. In Him vocation is real in the fullest possible sense and it is meaningless apart from Him. The statements concerning immediate vocation, effectual calling, and the once and continued calling of Jesus Christ have meaning only as a description of His call.<sup>4</sup> But, because He calls, our calling is an unquestionably real happening in our lives.

What is the purpose of vocation? Vocation is a great mystery, no less a mystery than the Christmas miracle.<sup>5</sup> Those called of God are born of God. They are called in order that they might be Christians.

This is by no means self-evident. If being a Christian

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1. ibid., p. 517.

2. ibid., p. 517.

3. ibid., p. 518.

4. ibid., p. 520.

5. ibid., p. 521.

depends on calling, 'every supposed...Christian would have to test whether and how far, in what he regards as his Christianity, there is a completely non-traditional element.'<sup>1</sup> Yet, as we have it in the New Testament, the term Christian seems to mean one called to discipleship through the ministry of disciples.<sup>2</sup> It does, then, mean something non-traditional. It is not membership of a Christian culture which makes a man a Christian.<sup>3</sup> Rather, a Christian is 'one who belongs to Jesus Christ in a special way':

[the existence of Christians] among all other men is determined...by their faith in Him, by their liberating and yet also binding and active knowledge that all men and therefore they themselves belong to Him.  
(C.D. IV/3, p. 526)

How do men belong to Jesus Christ in this special sense? Certainly not by belonging to Christian tradition, nor through allegiance to Christ as 'the central supporting and symbolical figure'<sup>4</sup> of that tradition. The Christian confession is that Christ is Lord. 'We have a lord when we acquire and maintain him as such in virtue of his lordly power.'<sup>5</sup> He has chosen us, not we Him. To be a Christian, then, is not a matter of our affirming Christian tradition or choosing Christ in His symbolical value, but of finding Him as Lord. How does He place men under His Lordship? Certainly not by compulsion.<sup>6</sup> His power contrasts with that of nature, death, human lords, and demonically gifted individuals, i.e.,

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1. ibid., p. 523.

2. ibid., p. 525.

3. ibid., p. 526.

4. ibid., p. 526.

5. ibid., p. 528.

6. ibid., p. 528.

the power which compells submission. Christ uses power, but it is not the blind power which is insensitive to its subjects and suppresses them, nor is it the overwhelming power of the numinous. His power does not dominate so as to defeat and subjugate, but creates free recognition of Himself.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Jesus' 'seizure of power' differs from all others in that 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'<sup>2</sup> This power is the power of His Word, in which He 'makes Himself known as the One He is for all and therefore specifically for [the Christian], thus liberating him to know Him.'<sup>3</sup> Jesus thereby overcomes anxiety and gives confidence.

In this confidence in which there is no anxiety, He calls with liberating and creative force, summoning non-being into being, giving Himself unreservedly to the one whom He calls, delivering Himself up to him, enabling him to hear self-evidently and without argument like the first disciples, and on no other basis than the obviously all-sufficient basis of His call.  
(C.D. IV/3, p. 530)

The called man leaves behind his anxious existence in which he lived as though Jesus were not the One He is for all men and therefore for himself, and makes use of the freedom bestowed on him, living 'on the clear assumption that Jesus Christ is the One He is for all men and therefore for him.'<sup>4</sup> In this way, 'the vocation of man is the special enduement of grace which distinguishes...him from all others.'<sup>5</sup>

Barth has thus shown that the sole ground of Christian

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1. ibid., p. 529.
  2. ibid., p. 529.
  3. ibid., p. 529.
  4. ibid., p. 530.
  5. ibid., p. 530.

existence is vocation, and that this takes place as Jesus reveals Himself as the One He is, i.e., makes Himself known in His Word. Vocation depends on nothing in man himself, in his freedom or his faith. On the contrary, it is Jesus Christ who overcomes man's reluctance and inability to use the freedom given him. In a certain sense it might be said that Barth's understanding of 'effectual calling' is a doctrine of irresistible grace, but Barth steers clear from what came to be meant by that doctrine. The roots of the problem go back to Calvin. For Calvin (as for Barth) calling depends on election, but Calvin believed that election takes place in God's secret decree, and so he can say that 'the special election which otherwise would remain hidden in God, he [God] at length manifests by his calling.'<sup>1</sup> Thus for Calvin it is not in the first instance Jesus Christ who makes Himself known in effectual calling. It is the secret election of God which is manifested. Despite Calvin's fundamental thesis that the Christian's entire life is contained in Christ, he here leaves the way open for Christ to become no more than the instrument of the revelation of God's secret election. Indeed, Calvin speaks not so much of Christ calling men to Himself as of God's secret election of grace. The impersonality latent in this doctrine becomes clear in the Westminster Confession where God's grace is thought of as working on man with a kind of irresistible power. When the Confession speaks of men being 'enlightened', coming 'most freely, being made willing by His grace,' and

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1. Calvin, Institute, III, 24, 1.



being 'quickened and renewed', it has in mind that this happens by '[God's] almighty power determining them to what is good.'<sup>1</sup> This power is further specified as the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> But the Confession cannot guarantee the graciousness of this power because it refrains from speaking of Jesus Christ calling men to Himself, thus making known the election of God. It leaves room for the power of God and the Spirit to be something other than the gracious drawing of Christ to Himself. It can only assert and not demonstrate the graciousness of the irresistible power of God's grace. Barth's doctrine penetrates much deeper and gives good ground for believing that the power with which God works in calling man is entirely gracious, being nothing other than the grace of Jesus Christ Himself. Because Barth makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men, he can also make it clear that He does not merely mediate knowledge of God's secret election, but also gives men knowledge of Himself in whom all men and therefore this particular man are called. Though it will be necessary later to ask some questions concerning this account of effectual calling, this will be done only in the context of Barth's own understanding of the grace of God.

Vocation means a new existence, but it is 'a human form' of existence.<sup>3</sup> The old creation is not destroyed, and a Christian must continually receive afresh his freedom. But

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1. West. Conf., Chap. X, 1.

2. ibid., Chap. X, 2.

3. C.D. IV/3, p. 530.

Christians are also children of God. They exist in close proximity with Jesus Christ. He is Son of God by nature, they only by adoption, nevertheless they are genuinely sons of God.<sup>1</sup>

As men who live in fellowship with Jesus Christ, Christians are also sons of God. Barth describes this fellowship with rich insight. The simplest description of this fellowship is that of discipleship.<sup>2</sup> This term indicates both the distinctive order in this fellowship and also its perfection. The Christian 'lives his own life in a fellowship with [Jesus'] life which is not ordered by himself but by Him.'<sup>3</sup> Jesus has the right of lordship because the Christian is His property.<sup>4</sup> As Jesus calls him, the Christian is led to the insight that he belongs to Him, that he is handed over to the One who offered Himself up for him, and so he freely gives himself over to this Lord. 'In this self-understanding to which he is awakened by his vocation, the super- and sub-ordination in his fellowship with the One who calls him...can only be...self-evident.'<sup>5</sup> The fellowship between Christ and His disciple is closer still. Jesus has the superiority but it is precisely in this priority that He establishes the perfection of the fellowship, which on the disciple's side consists in his free obedience.

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1. ibid., p. 533.

2. ibid., p. 535.

3. ibid., p. 536.

4. ibid., p. 536.

5. ibid., p. 537.

It is the power of the Word of Jesus Christ which impresses upon man His right of ownership...awakening and impelling him to a spontaneous recognition and acceptance of this right, in which he gives himself to the discipleship of Jesus Christ, becoming obedient in his freedom and free in his obedience.  
(C.D. IV/3, p. 538)

The power of Jesus' Word is that of the Holy Spirit, and thus it is the freedom of God to be present as God in a man's innermost being, there making man free to be man:

...without ceasing to be Lord or forfeiting His transcendence, but rather in its exercise, He gives and imparts Himself to him, entering into him as his Lord in all His majesty and setting up His throne within him. Thus His control...becomes the most truly distinctive feature of this man, the centre and basis of his human existence, the axiom of his first thinking and utterance, the origin of his freest volition and action, in short the principle of his spontaneous being.  
(C.D. IV/3, p. 538)

An even more precise description of this intimate fellowship is possible. Fellowship does not dissolve into identity, and there is no merging of one into the other: 'both become and are genuinely what they are,'<sup>1</sup> but the perfection of this fellowship demands that we speak of nothing less than union.<sup>2</sup>

Union with Christ is not the 'climax'<sup>3</sup> of Christian fellowship and discipleship, but its ground and presupposition.<sup>4</sup> It is the reality of union which is being unfolded in the disciple's fellowship with Him.

Barth first speaks of the union of Christ with the Christian. From Christ's standpoint, it means that, as the

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1. ibid., p. 539.

2. ibid., p. 540.

3. ibid., p. 548.

4. ibid., p. 541.

One in whom alone, without assistance from any other, the world has been reconciled to God, He does not will to be alone.<sup>1</sup> He now moves forward from His resurrection to His final parousia as the Proclaimer of the act of God accomplished in Him, but 'He does not go alone, but wills to be what He is and do what He does in company with others whom He calls for this purpose.'<sup>2</sup> He does this 'really and totally', 'giving Himself to them and making them His own.'<sup>3</sup>

From the Christians' standpoint this union of Christ with the Christian means that, though they contribute nothing to Christ's finished work, they are not 'ordained for pure passivity', but, as surely as He does not will to tread alone His way as Proclaimer of the Kingdom, so surely they for their part must be with Him as His 'companions...and witnesses'.<sup>4</sup>

This fellowship of Christ with the Christian would not be complete without the reciprocal movement from below upwards.<sup>5</sup> 'His action has its correspondence...in an action of the Christian.'<sup>6</sup>

'That Christ links Himself with the Christian settles the fact that the latter, too, does not go alone.'<sup>7</sup> He follows Christ, and, 'both as a whole and in detail this

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1. ibid., p. 541.

2. ibid., p. 542.

3. ibid., p. 542.

4. ibid., p. 542.

5. ibid., p. 543.

6. ibid., p. 544.

7. ibid., p. 544.



will always be the venture of a free decision and leap.<sup>1</sup>  
 It is not a leap in the dark, because 'if there is any action which is well-grounded and therefore assured in respect of its goal, it is the...obedience of the Christian.'<sup>2</sup> He does the one thing he can do.

The decision or leap of faith...consists in the fact that he takes himself seriously as the man he is and recognises himself to be in Jesus Christ instead of immediately forgetting his true self (who and what he is in Christ), like the man who looks at himself in a mirror and then goes on his way (Jas. 1: 23f.). It consists in the fact that he begins to act on this basis, i.e., on the basis of Jesus Christ and as the man he is in Him. (C.D. IV/3, p. 544).

Not only is the Christian not alone but he also cleaves to Christ and cannot part from Him. The criterion of the genuineness of his faith consists in 'allowing Him alone to be what He alone is...'<sup>3</sup> As he recognises Christ he also recognises himself and his own truest life in Him. In this freedom he can only follow Christ.

In the freedom given [Christians] as those they are, they have only one option, namely to believe in Him, to obey Him and to confess Him, and in so doing, in making this movement, to unite themselves with Him as He in His turning to them, in calling them and making Himself known to them, unites Himself with them. (C.D. IV/3, p. 545)

It was observed in the introduction to this study that modern man seeks a secure starting point for his project or venture in life. He tries to make himself and his self-knowledge his starting point, his launching place. He believes that having chosen himself as his starting point he can guarantee his future as the realisation of his

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1. ibid., p. 544.

2. ibid., p. 544.

3. ibid., p. 545.

subjectivity. His goal is the fulfillment of the self which he has chosen. It was seen that this venture is in fact an adventure, a foolish venture which necessarily ends in self-loss. Barth's account of the goal of vocation exactly answers this problem. Since the Lord has turned to us and united Himself with us, we are free to know ourselves in Him and free to choose Him, and therefore ourselves in Him, as the one necessary starting point of all our thinking, speaking and acting. We do not go out into the dark, or make an arbitrary leap, but we do the one thing we can do - know ourselves in Christ and act forth on that basis. Only by self-deception can we do otherwise. We move out securely, yet also in genuine venture, toward the goal promised and guaranteed in the starting point, i.e., the fulfillment of our being and our subjectivity in Christ.

This is important for this study, and it is worth drawing attention to the following aspects of Barth's position: 1. In the fellowship with Christ which is grounded in union with Him, man knows himself as he is, and therefore has a secure and uncapricious starting point on which to act. Since this is his being in Christ it is not a basis which he creates yet it is not alien to him. It is given to him as his own truest and freest being. 2. This starting point, being the reconciliation of the world with God, is also the future toward which he moves. It guarantees the significance of his acts as a Christian. 3. No-one can undertake this venture for another. Each man must live it for himself. 'It will always be a venture in which no man can wait for or rely on others, as though they could represent him or make the leap

for him.'<sup>1</sup> This both makes it urgent that a man make the leap of faith and also gives each man who makes this venture the glory of having realised the future which the Lord places before him. He must go each step of the way by faith, and in a certain sense each step is strange to him, but by going out in the daring of faith he enters into a future which can be his only by this daring. He does not go alone, depending on his own initiative and resources, but in company with Christ his Counterpart,<sup>2</sup> and therefore he knows that he will never be left in the lurch. Thus, as he moves out toward the future he moves certainly toward the goal. 4. Barth has shown that (a) man has an immanent but also transcendent starting point which (b) guarantees his future and (c) provides him with the resources whereby he himself can realise that goal. These three points answer modern man's desire for (a) a starting point in his subjectivity which (b) promises him a future which is the fulfilment of that subjectivity and (c) which also enables him to grasp the energy needed to work toward that projected goal. But the self-realisation modern man seeks ends in self-alienation. Man finds he has 'created' for himself only emptiness, lovelessness and loneliness. In complete contrast to this Barth speaks of man's starting point as his fellowship with Christ. Where modern man fears the Other and chooses himself, thus realising self-alienation, the Christian chooses the One who is Other and yet the very ground of his being, and thus

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1. ibid., p. 544.

2. ibid., p. 544.

realises a life in reciprocal fulfillment with the Other. He realises himself not in isolation but in the fellowship which answers and completes him as himself. 5. Nothing can alter the fact that Christ has turned toward man and united Himself with him, but this does not mean that man does not exercise his subjectivity and choose Christ. Barth says that the Christian 'chooses [Christ] as the starting point and therefore the goal of his thinking, speech, volition and action.'<sup>1</sup> There is only one thing for which the Christian is free, but this does not alter the fact that the Christian actually makes this choice, turning to Christ as Christ has turned to him. Indeed, Christ fulfills his own union with man as men freely unite themselves with Him. Though some questions remain concerning Barth's concept of freedom, there is no doubt that he allows man's response to Christ an essential place.

Barth follows his discussion of union with Christ with three chapters treating that life in detail. For the purpose of this study, only a few points need be noted.

1. Christ calls a man not only or even primarily that he may be saved but that he may become His servant. He enjoys his salvation as he serves Christ as His witness in the world. Barth rejects any notion of the Christian as co-worker with Christ, but he goes further here than elsewhere in the Dogmatics in saying that the Christian co-operates with Him.<sup>2</sup> When service is rendered, 'two very different active subjects are obviously at work together in

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1. C.D. IV/3, p. 544.

2. ibid., p. 600; cf. C.D. IV/1, p. 113.



different ways, but with a clear differentiation of function.<sup>1</sup> In his own place, the Christian is no less free than his Lord, but he performs an action in which he assists the action of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Christ lives in all men, including the Christian, as the Saviour of the world,<sup>3</sup> and any suggestion of co-operation in this respect would only wickedly question the adequacy of His work.<sup>4</sup> Yet there is 'another form' in which Christ lives not in all men but in the Christian alone.<sup>5</sup> As He proclaims His Word of salvation, He does not will to be alone, but summons Christians to be His heralds.<sup>6</sup> He calls them to this work, living in them in this service, and it is proper to speak of their co-operation in His prophetic office. They partake in the ministerium Verbi divini.<sup>7</sup>

2. Barth asks why Christ wills to use men in this way when it would seem that He could proclaim His message more efficiently without their clumsy witness. They are not indispensable to Him and it is they who need His assistance and not He theirs.<sup>8</sup> Why then does He burden Himself with them? Barth answers that it is a 'special demonstration of His mercy' that Christ calls men to this task.

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1. ibid., p. 601.

2. ibid., p. 603.

3. ibid., p. 604.

4. ibid., p. 605.

5. ibid., p. 605.

6. ibid., p. 607.

7. ibid., p. 607.

8. ibid., p. 607.

Superfluous in this glorious sense, they live only by the fact that Christ permits and commands their ministering co-operation which He might very well despise....[Their word of witness] can and should be the sign which accompanies and confirms His self-revelation: no more, but also no less.

(C.D. IV/3, p. 608).

Christ's mercy extends so far that He makes Christians signs of His reconciling work, and hence their witness becomes necessary to Him.

3. If the Christian is the man who follows Christ as witness, as so is a sign of the reconciliation of the world completed in Christ, and if, by His grace, he is necessary to Him in this sense, his life must include both affliction and liberation. He suffers affliction because, as he witnesses to Christ, he encounters the world's hostility to Christ. The world cannot bear to be told that in Christ reconciliation has taken place: it does not want to know that Christ's salvation applies to it. The Christian cannot escape this affliction, and he should see it as a good and not an evil thing, since in it he takes part in Christ's warfare and victory. Barth's discussion here gives further evidence of the necessary place of the human subject in his theology. The human subject, on the basis of Christ's finished work to which it can add nothing, accompanies Christ in His progress through the unbelieving world and actually plays a part in the history of salvation. Christ brings His salvation to men only through those who are already His disciples. He is united with them, and as they suffer the world's opposition, He conducts His struggle with it, waging His battle through their active service.

Barth's concern for human subjectivity is given further scope in his discussion of the Christian's liberation. Christ is not the means toward the end of Christian liberation, but is this end Himself. Fellowship with Him is the ratio and telos of the Christian's life. The Christian's liberation is real only as he lives out Christ's purpose for him. He enjoys his liberation as he proclaims Christ the liberator to others. Barth does not mean that Christ uses the Christian as a means toward the conversion of others - he rejects this notion as firmly as he rejects that of the Christian using Christ. Rather, he means that Christ gives the Christian a share in the liberation which He has for all men. The man who has received this liberation (and he alone) can witness effectively to others.<sup>1</sup> Because he is united with Christ, others meet in his witness the self-witness of Christ, and because he is not identical with Christ others meet in him a sign and demonstration of the liberation of Christ. Thus, the active subjectivity of the Christian is a necessary part of Christ's prophetic self-witness to the world.

#### Assessment of Barth's Understanding of the Calling of Man

Just as the strength of Barth's doctrine of man's sanctification rests on participatio Christi, so his doctrine of man's vocation depends on unio cum Christo. For him man is effectually called on the grounds of his union with Christ, and, as the Spirit of Christ enlightens him as to his being

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1. *ibid.*, pp. 661-2.

in Christ, he makes use of this self-knowledge, spontaneously doing the one thing he is free to do, i.e., act out his being in Christ as Christ's servant. In this, Jesus Christ claims His property, but He does so only by enlightening man as to man he really is, and thus by calling him to act in accordance with his self-knowledge, and therefore in freedom.

It has, however, been argued in this study,<sup>1</sup> that man without the Holy Spirit and faith is separated from Christ: 'anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.' (Rom. 8: 9). This is not to deny that the sinner is sustained in being by Christ, nor that Christ has died for his sins and is raised for his justification, but it is to say that the man not yet baptised by the Spirit into Christ is estranged from Christ. Thus, as the Spirit of Christ comes to a man, He does not enlighten him as to his being already in Christ, but as to his alienation from Him.

Having said this it must immediately be added that the Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, enlightens man as to the being of Christ for him. Proceeding from Christ's incarnation, baptism, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to the Father, He enlightens the sinner as to Christ's union with fallen humanity, His purification of it, and His elevation of it to God. The Spirit therefore enlightens man as to the being of Christ for him in which He is the Way from sin to God. He enlightens men to know Christ who is the narrow Way which leads to life. Thus, the Spirit brings men

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1. Chapter III, pp. 141ff.



to know that, precisely in their alienation from Christ, Christ is their Way from sin to God. The Spirit enlightens the sinner as to the amazing fact that, although he is alienated from Christ and not united with Him, Christ, by virtue of His purification of sinful human nature, unites him with Himself as he treads this Way. As Christ baptises him with His Spirit he goes through the narrow door and treads the narrow Way.<sup>1</sup>

In Chapter III the problem was noted that if Barth's notion is rejected of man being united with Christ apart from his act of faith it becomes very difficult to understand how man can be united with Him at all.<sup>2</sup> If man needs to have faith in Christ in order to be united with Him and yet can have faith in Him only if He is united with Him, an impasse is reached. But this doctrine of Christ the Way solves it. Christ, as the Way from sin to God, is also the Way from the sinner to Himself. In a strange and glorious way, Christ is the Way to Himself.<sup>3</sup> The sinner cannot make a single step toward Christ without Christ. Apart from Christ he cannot even confess his sin. But since Christ has purified sinful human nature, He gives Himself to him as the living Way in whom is confession and repentance. He calls

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1. It is correct to say both that as the sinner treads this Way he is united with Christ and that as he is united with Christ he treads this Way since man's baptism with the Spirit of Christ and His obedience of faith take place together. Neither one precedes the other, and neither happens without the other.
  2. Chapter III, pp. 144-5.
  3. This point is made forcibly by McLeod Campbell in his sermon on Matthew 7: 13, Sermons and Lectures (R.B.Lusk, Greenock, 1832), pp. 43-5.

him to confession and baptism, inviting him to receive Him and to live in Him. As the sinner treads this Way, following His command to repent and believe, Christ baptises him with His Spirit, thus incorporating him into Himself. Thus, the sinner who was alienated from Christ comes to be united with Him. It is entirely the work of Christ but it involves the faith and obedience of man.

If this picture is basically correct, Barth's account of Christ calling men to Himself on the basis of His revelation of Himself in the Word needs alteration, though only slight alteration. It remains true that Christ reveals Himself to sinners as the One He is, and that He thereby brings them to self-knowledge. But the self-knowledge which he awakens in them is not that of knowing themselves as already in Him, but that of knowing themselves as the ones to whom He gives Himself. As He reveals Himself in His Word to them, they both know themselves as sinners and Himself as their Way from sin to life. They can refuse to accept this self-knowledge, as is often seen in the New Testament. Barth's notion that there can be no ineffectual calling cannot be sustained. Since men are not already united with Christ before their calling, they can reject His call. On the other hand, Barth's notion of the spontaneous freedom with which men answer Christ's calling must be strengthened because, as Christ reveals Himself as the Way, men know Him as their Way, as the One who has given Himself wholly for them. Knowing themselves as these ones, they freely and gladly turn to follow Him who is their own truest life. They act spontaneously on the

basis of genuine self-knowledge. They give themselves to Him who gave Himself for them. It is not that they follow Him because they realise that they are already given to Him, as Barth suggests, but that they give themselves to Him because they realise that He calls them, both in their being and in their knowledge and act, calling them to Himself who is their Way and their Life.

This correction of Barth leads to an enrichment of his conception of the grace of Jesus Christ in His calling. It means that Jesus Christ loves men so completely that He will not unite them with Himself without their response. Though He has bought them at the cost of His own blood, He does not take possession of them without their answering response of love to Him. He is so wholly gracious in His love that He will possess a man only with that man's response to Him. (To say this in no way endangers the doctrine that Christ has bought the right to ownership<sup>1</sup> of all men and that He will exercise that right in raising all men from the dead. It means that He seals men as His own only as they allow themselves to be possessed by Him.) In His perfect grace, Jesus Christ makes Himself the starting point for sinners even in their estrangement. In the power of His Word and Spirit, He enters them, becoming their Way, becoming the very path on which to go through the gates of new life. Where before they had nothing on which to stand, now they find themselves grounded in Him. This happens only together with their trust and obedience to His Word, only as they

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1. II Pet. 2: 1.

follow in the Way, since He graciously desires their self-giving to Him. Just as He gave Himself wholly for them, so He desires them to give themselves wholly, in being and in act, to Him.

It is worth noting that for Calvin a man is incorporate into Christ only through the work of the Spirit and that this takes place only together with his faith.<sup>1</sup> He says:

...so long as we are without Christ and separated from him, nothing which he suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us. To communicate to us the blessings which he received from the Father, he must become ours and dwell in us. Accordingly, he is called our Head, and the first-born among many brethren, while, on the other hand, we are said to be ingrafted into him and clothed with him, all which he possess being, as I have said, nothing to us, until we become one with him. And although it is true that we obtain this by faith,...the very nature of the case teaches us to ascend higher, and to inquire into the secret efficacy of the Spirit, to which it is owing that we enjoy Christ and all his blessings. (Institute, III, 1,1)

Men are 'ingrafted' into Christ, incorporated into Him, only with faith and the operation of the Spirit. By holding this, Calvin is able to give man's response the full dignity that it has for the grace of Christ. He sees that, although Christ has died for all men, He unites men with Himself only as they respond to Him in trust and obedience.

The Gospels provide rich insight into the grace of Jesus in calling men to Himself. The Jews were Jesus' own people. They belonged to Him by right and yet they resisted His call. They refused to repent, be baptised and to follow Him.<sup>2</sup> 'He

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1. P. van Buren, Christ in Our Place (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1957), p. 97: 'Our incorporation into Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit, by whose power "we are introduced to the enjoyment of Christ".' Also, p. 102: 'For Calvin,...faith is the conditio sine qua non of salvation.'

2. Lk. 7: 29-30.



came to his own home, and his own people received him not.' (Jn. 1: 11). Jerusalem was the city of the great King, and Jesus called its people to Himself, yet they rejected Him. He wept over the city: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,... How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!' (Matt. 23: 37). Jesus' call was based on right of ownership yet it was not effectual. Though they were in His presence, and He revealed their sins and their desolation for what they were (Matt. 23), they refused to accept this knowledge and be baptised into repentance. The same thing is seen at a more intimate level in the story of the rich young ruler. He came to Jesus asking what he should do to inherit eternal life. With the insight of love, Jesus saw that there was one thing lacking, and He did not withhold from him this knowledge. Yet the young man would not accept this knowledge, this knowledge which penetrated right to the centre of his being. The most instructive case is that of Judas. His calling differed in no respect from that of the other eleven apostles, Jesus showed him especial love on the night of the betrayal by handing him the sop of bread which symbolised His giving Himself for him, yet he turned aside from his 'ministry and apostleship.' (Acts 1: 25). In all these instances, and many others, Jesus' calling and drawing of love met with no positive response from the hearers. Refusing to enter the narrow gate which leads to life, they had no part in the coming Kingdom.

Where Jesus' calling was effectual, it met with a positive response on the part of the hearers. In His

presence, their self-knowledge was carried through to the point where they acknowledged Him as their Lord. Jesus showed great insight of loving concern for the Samaritan woman at the well, and treated her so firmly and tenderly that she could confess her sins, acknowledge Him and bring others to Him through her witness. The writer of the Gospel draws particular attention to Jesus' awakening the woman to self-knowledge. Throughout, Jesus took the initiative, yet He led in such a way that at each stage she was increased in self-knowledge. In the story of the calling of Zacheas, Jesus saw his need as a despised tax-collector and bestowed on him the great honour of choosing to dine at his house. In the light of such compassionate understanding, Zacheas spontaneously repented, completely altering his way of life. In encounter after encounter Jesus' love preceded a man, penetrated into his inner life, and led him through to the point of confessing Jesus as the Christ. As Jesus revealed Himself as the One He is, they knew themselves as the people they were, repented and followed Him.

These observations from the Gospels go no further than showing that, where the self-knowledge Jesus created was not rejected, He led those He encountered through to acknowledging themselves as His. It was only after Pentecost that Jesus could baptise men into Himself. According to I Corinthians 12: 3 it is only by the Holy Spirit that a man is able to confess Jesus as Lord. It is by the same Spirit that he is baptised into the body of Christ (v. 13). Similarly, Romans 8: 1-17 draws a definite distinction between those who are in Christ Jesus (v. 1) and walk by the Spirit,

and those who are in the flesh: 'All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God' (v. 14), but 'anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him' (v. 9). In Acts, baptism in the Spirit and membership of the Christian community, the body of Christ, are closely connected.

It is thus clear that Jesus Christ in His grace values man's response and baptises men into Himself only as He calls forth that response. The value of this response to Him may be illustrated by means of a passage of Mosaic law which may reasonably be interpreted as indicating the response between Christ and man. According to Exodus 21: 1-6, when an Israelite bought a Hebrew slave, the slave was to serve his master for six years and then go out free (hinnam), but if the slave

plainly says 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out free,' then the master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for life.  
(Ex. 21: 5-6)

Though the master had bought the slave, he did not become his for life without his free expression of love. This seems to parallel Christ. He bought all men with His own blood and has right of ownership. But He does not 'bore their ears', seal them as His own, without their free profession of love to Him. It is not that the slaves bring anything to their Master, or that He needs their response, but that He is so gracious that He will not seal them without their acknowledgement of Him as the Lord they love. Because of His pure grace, His perfect courtesy, He cannot possess them without their plain words: 'I love my master...I will not go out free.'

It is at this point that Jesus victory over sinners shines out strongly. That Jesus is Victor means in this context that He wins men for Himself by His grace, His courtesy. He wins His enemies by love; He conquers the ungracious by grace. We sinners are thoroughly ungracious, yet, with wise patience, He is continually gracious to us, thus bringing us to repent and to follow Him.<sup>1</sup> The essence of this wise patience is His love for His enemies (Matt. 5: 43f.; Lk. 6: 27, 35; Rom. 5: 10, 12: 14, 17-21), such that He converts His enemies into His friends.<sup>2</sup> As we persecute Him (cf. Saul, Acts 9: 4), He pursues us with relentless grace, persisting in love to us until we love Him.

The perfect courtesy by which Jesus wins His victory over His enemies is well illustrated in George Herbert's short poem, Love:

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,  
                   Guilty of dust and sin.  
 But quick-eyed love, observing me grow slack  
                   From my first entrance in,  
 Drew near to me, sweetly questioning,  
                   "If I lacked anything."

"A guest," I answered, "worthy to be here."  
                   Love said, "You shall be he."  
 "I, the unkind, the ungrateful? Ah, my dear,  
                   I cannot look on Thee."  
 Love took my hand, and smiling, did reply,  
                   "Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame  
                   Go where it doth deserve."  
 "And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"  
                   "My dear, then I will serve."  
 "You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."  
                   So I did sit and eat.

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1. Cf. Barth, Credo, trans. J.S. McNab (Hodder and Stoughton, 1936), p. 201. Also, C.D. II/1, pp. 406-39.
  2. It is a severe weakness of the Dogmatics that Barth does not give centrality to Jesus' power as this conquering of enmity by love.



This is a poem and not a piece of theology, yet as such it is particularly suited to express the perfect graciousness of the power which Jesus exercises in calling a man to Himself. Herbert indicates the sensitivity to the sinner with which Jesus answers all the soul's rebellion, fear, shame and embarrassment. As He bids him welcome, He gently and surely penetrates to the root of his reluctance: shame. He answers by revealing Himself as the One who has borne the blame. Thus, He does not seize power, but wins the sinner by the powerful arguments of His love. The poem celebrates the victory of this love. It is the love which, simply by loving, overcomes man's unkindness and ingratitude and brings him through to the astonished gratitude of the concluding lines.

Barth does not give great insight into this victory of the grace of Christ in His calling men to Himself. He does speak of Christ's power as different from all other power, but he fails to point to Christ's winning of the response of His enemies through the power of His love.

In order to give this intensification of Barth's understanding of the power of Christ's grace in His calling firm dogmatic foundation, some observations about the nature of the 'word of the cross' (I Cor. 1: 18) will be helpful. The resurrected Christ calls men through the word of the cross. He appeals to men from the point where He was fully identified with the sin of those He calls. As this crucified One, He has no power over men. He is in their hands. He can only appeal to men: 'Is it nothing to you all you who pass by.' (Lam. 1: 12). But as He reveals

Himself as this crucified One He also reveals Himself as identified with man's true condition. He awakens men to see that in His cross their sinful being is being destroyed, and that He is sorrowing in love for them. He opens their eyes to see that He has bound Himself in love to their intolerable condition. As this happens, the word of the cross becomes supremely powerful, because in it they are called out of their sin and called to their true life. They know that in Christ their sinful being was destroyed and that in Him they are new creatures. Thus, in calling them to Himself, the crucified One calls them to their own true and proper being in Him. The miracle happens that His love creates in them the courage to come to Him: they realise that there is 'no condemnation' in Him, and therefore they dare to give their sinful, alienated lives into His hands and to step forth living their new lives in Him.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FIRST STEP OF CONVERSION: BAPTISM

Barth's final teaching on baptism is particularly important for this study. He argues that baptism with water should not be regarded as a sacrament, as Christ's action, but as man's. It should be administered only on the specific request of the candidate. Since the grace of God in Jesus Christ aims at man's free obedience to Him, baptism with water should be allowed to be the glorious thing which it is: man's thankful response to grace. Far from meaning anything Pelagian by this, Barth wishes to allow the Reformers' emphasis on the work of the Spirit to come to fruition. Through baptism with the Spirit, man actively obeys God, claiming nothing for himself and receiving all from Christ.

Most of the themes of the Dogmatics praised earlier in this study find a fulfillment here. God's work and man's work are sharply distinguished, not in order to separate God and man, but in order to allow genuine obedience and fellowship:

What God does in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is exclusively His action. Similarly, what man can and should do in the face of the divine action is wholly his own human action. Let us be grateful that there is a necessary and firm connexion between God's action and ours, between ours and His.  
(C.D. IV/4, p. 72)

Man's action is not valued for its own sake, but because of its place in the fellowship between God and man. Man's obedience in baptism is 'the human step at which all that God willed from eternity and did in time was primarily aiming.'<sup>1</sup>

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1. C.D. IV/4, p. 151.

Barth here breaks through the slight tendency to Christomonism noticed in his doctrine of election. Further, in this fellowship between God and man, the work of the Spirit is allowed great scope. In the light of the baptism with the Spirit, Barth is able to say that 'to belittle what is done to man in [Christ] is to belittle Him.'<sup>1</sup> Although it will later be suggested that Barth still undervalues the creative work of the Spirit, this criticism will be made only in order to strengthen this thesis.

One observation is necessary before proceeding to a summary of the teaching of Barth's fragment on baptism. Barth thinks of baptism with the Spirit as the Spirit's regenerating work. In this, he is in basic agreement with Calvin:

Therefore, as we have said that salvation is perfected in the person of Christ, so, in order to make us partakers of it, he baptises us "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Luke 3: 16), enlightening us into the faith of his Gospel, and so regenerating us to be new creatures. (Institute, III, 1, 1)

(Barth, however, does not go so far as Calvin in allowing this regeneration actually to be a new creation and baptism into Christ.) This understanding of baptism with the Holy Spirit contrasts with that of Edward Irving, who presents powerful arguments for regarding it as a work beyond and greater than that of regeneration. The exact meaning of baptism with the Spirit is a matter of controversy, but for the purpose of this study it needs only to be said that, though this baptism will be taken in this chapter to mean

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1. ibid., p. 34.



regeneration, Irving's point that in it what was wrought in Christ becomes ours will be at the basis of the discussion.<sup>1</sup>

### Baptism with the Holy Spirit

The theme of this short volume is the freedom of men to convert to God. In Jesus Christ God has turned to man, and in the baptism with the Holy Spirit they are liberated and freely turn to Him. Water baptism is the first step of this new obedience.<sup>2</sup>

The book begins with the assumption that there is such a thing as human faithfulness corresponding to the faithfulness of God.<sup>3</sup> Such a fact is astonishing. The change from faithlessness to faithfulness is impossible with men. But what is impossible with men is possible with God.<sup>4</sup> In the history of Jesus Christ man was changed from being a covenant-breaker to being God's faithful covenant partner.<sup>5</sup>

His history takes place extra nos, entirely without our assistance, but it is a history which is also pro nobis and whose goal is realised in nobis. Jesus Christ takes man's place and intercedes for him there, thus beginning a history which sets up a contradiction within the very heart of man against his own faithlessness.<sup>6</sup> Through His history what was impossible with men now becomes their only possibility.

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1. see below, pp. 492-3.

2. C.D. IV/4, p. 43.

3. ibid., p. 1.

4. ibid., pp. 1-2.

5. ibid., pp. 13f.

6. ibid., pp. 22f.

In the fulfillment of divine possibility man is liberated to 'become what he was not...before and consequently to do what he did not...do before.'<sup>1</sup>

Man's liberation is entirely God's achievement. But this work is the work of intercession.<sup>2</sup> In making a new beginning for man God does not obtrude on man, push him out of the way and do violence to him. Man the covenant-breaker is destroyed in this intercession, a new man and a new heart is posited, but God does this in Jesus Christ. It is in the humanity - the fallen humanity He shares with other men - of Jesus Christ that the old is destroyed and the new set in its place. As God's intercession it is for all men, as done in our humanity it is done in our place and on our behalf. Taking place in Him it is not forced on us, but it is done for us. This intercession reaches its goal when men are awakened by the Holy Spirit to believe that the conversion of man which took place in Him is not held back from them but is given to them. They recognise His history as theirs. In Him they are liberated to 'confirm' God's judgment of them, both the negative rejection of them as sinners and the positive acceptance of them as justified.<sup>3</sup> They actually answer and confirm God's judgment. The fact that they do this in Jesus Christ alone makes it certain that they do it.

Man's liberation is entirely God's work, but the divine

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1. ibid., p. 5.

2. ibid., p. 22.

3. ibid., p. 160. 'in their human work and word, in the baptism which [baptiser and baptised] perform together, they can and should accept, confirm and repeat it [i.e., the divine Yes addressed to the community].'

change which comes over man happens in genuine intercourse between God and man. There is nothing mechanical in this change since God in His freedom takes man seriously as His partner. A Christomonist interpretation of this change gives no place to human freedom, to the man who is the goal of Christ's work.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, an anthropomonist construction must be rejected because it takes no account of the divine Other to whom man responds, and therefore it cannot speak convincingly of obedience and trust.<sup>2</sup> Both these accounts of the conversion of men dissolve into a monism the mystery which confronts us here - they impose on it a false notion of the unity of God and man.<sup>3</sup> They conjure away the interaction between God and man. Indeed, to anticipate for a moment the shape of Barth's account of water baptism, it could be said that the whole discussion is concerned with this interaction: God calls forth man's response, and in that response man calls on Him - water baptism is both response to God and prayer to Him. God hears this prayer and responds by giving the Holy Spirit. Clearly, the intercourse between God and man is an essential element in the foundation of the Christian life.

We may speak of this new beginning for man only in the strength of two related presuppositions.<sup>4</sup> First, the history of Jesus Christ is not enclosed within itself: it is pro nobis. Through His resurrection from the dead, He has power to affect

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1. ibid., p. 19.

2. ibid., pp. 19f.

3. ibid., p. 20.

4. ibid., p. 23.

all other men: His history accomplished extra nos triumphs over death and so, without losing its concrete particularity, reaches all other men. Second, looking at this beginning from man's side, the power at work in this change is the Holy Spirit, the self-witness of the resurrected Christ imparting Himself in the heart of the believer.

These two presuppositions are equivalent to the fact that Jesus Christ baptises men with the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> The divine change which comes over men is their baptism with the Holy Spirit. Barth notes that he is using this term in a broader sense than it has in the New Testament, but he believes his use of it is legitimate.<sup>2</sup> He wishes to speak of the whole movement of man's turning to faithfulness as his baptism with the Spirit, whereas the New Testament seems to mean by the term a specific moment in that turning.<sup>3</sup>

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1. ibid., p. 30.

2. ibid., pp. 30f.

3. Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, Baptism in the Spirit (S.C.M., London, 1970). Dunn regards baptism with the Spirit as 'the decisive and climactic experience in conversion-initiation.' (p. 4). It comes at the completion of the process of conversion. He argues that, in Luke's Gospel, there is a part in conversion assigned to man and a part which God does - 'in conversion one believes, commits oneself to Christ, receives the Spirit from Christ. Man's act in conversion is to repent, to turn, to believe. God's act is to give the Spirit on believing.' (p. 96) But Dunn's distinction between man's act and God's is very different from Barth's. He disputes the place of the Spirit in man's coming to conversion and turning, and regards faith as a condition of receiving the Spirit (p. 228). This tends to lead back to justification by works, since repentance is not given by God (as it is in the New Testament, e.g., Acts 6: 31) and the human act becomes the fulfilled condition for receiving the Spirit. In keeping with this position Dunn thinks that Barth is 'confused as to whether water baptism is the human response to the divine initiative of Spirit baptism, or Spirit baptism the divine response to the human petition of water baptism.' (p. 94) Dunn argues the latter position. He  
(Contd.)



Barth lists five points which indicate the nature of this baptism.

1. Jesus Christ alone acts as the author and finisher of faith. A man does not become a Christian by his own decision;<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ alone makes a man a Christian.
2. But the foundation of the Christian life is a form of the grace of God which actually reconciles the world to God<sup>2</sup> and this means that specific men are really turned to God: man is not unaffected by this reconciliation, but because the reconciliation is genuine, the whole man is claimed in the grace which comes to him.
3. Since the whole man is claimed - God is wholly gracious - grace demands gratitude.<sup>3</sup> Barth underlines the demand of gratitude, contradictory though it may seem, because God surrounds man with His goodness and gives him the freedom with which to respond. In being set in the ambience of God, he is set on his own feet and of his own volition walks according to the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Here man is taken seriously, and finds that he is taken seriously, as the creature which is different from God,

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Contd.) is quite right to say that Barth holds both positions, but this is not a confusion on Barth's part since Barth holds that the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ carries through the entire movement of conversion, and thus the Holy Spirit both moves man to respond to God and, in this response, to cry out for the Spirit. In arguing this, Barth avoids the danger of giving man's repentance and faith any suggestion of a 'justifying status'. Barth can thus maintain that Jesus Christ is the author of faith (p. 31). A constant theme in this part of the Dogmatics is that the Spirit brings us to cry out for the Spirit - Veni Creator Spiritus!

1. C.D. IV/4, pp. 32f.
2. ibid., p. 33.
3. ibid., p. 35.
4. ibid., p. 36.

which, for all its dependence is autonomous before Him, which is of age. Here he is empowered for his own act, and invited, commanded and encouraged to perform it. (C.D. IV/4, p. 35)

In contrast to 'the death of God' theologies published about the time as this volume (1967), Barth does not understand man's coming of age to mean his turning away from God, standing on the ground he creates for himself, but rather as his turning to God who sets him on his own feet.

4. Being thus established in fellowship with God as His partner, man's isolation from his fellow-men is broken and he is set within a new life of 'distinctive fellow-humanity'.<sup>1</sup> No longer bound in proud isolation, he is a free and therefore responsible member of the people of God. In the preceding third point Barth stressed the Christian's freedom, in this point he stresses the responsibility this freedom entails. It is not simply the responsibility which belongs to the freedom to renounce and to pledge, it is the mutual responsiveness of the children of God. In becoming a Christian, a man freely becomes a member of this community: he becomes a 'companion, fellow and brother of these others, bound to them for better or for worse.'<sup>2</sup> Most theologies at this point use the language of initiation into Christ. Barth thinks rather of the Spirit awakening men to take hold of the life which is already theirs in Christ, and thus of their liberation to take that step whereby they become members of Christ's community. Though this conception will be criticised below, it does have the value of taking

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1. ibid., p. 36.

2. ibid., p. 37.

seriously the fact that Christ lives among the men He makes free to serve Him and therefore each other. It gives great stress to the fellowship of the community, and to the fact that Christ is present in the mutual responsiveness of its members. He lives in the charismata of the community.<sup>1</sup>

5. This distinctive fellow humanity is only the beginning of a new creation.<sup>2</sup> The baptism with the Holy Spirit bears fruit within the love of the community and even more importantly it is the constantly renewed beginning of a life which hastens toward Jesus Christ who apprehends them as they long to see Him face to face.

These five points unfold what it means that Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of faith. Man's turning to faithfulness is entirely His work. But as He baptises man with His Holy Spirit He brings His work to its goal, i.e., man's free turning to God and his walking in the Spirit and on his own feet. We may note that these five points progress from the movement of God toward man to the freedom bestowed on man and conclude ~~with~~ man's movement toward God. They describe the realisation of the goal of God's intercession for man.

### Baptism with Water

The first section of this book, the discussion of baptism with the Spirit, enquires into the divine origin of the foundation of the Christian life. Barth now enquires

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1. ibid., p. 38.

2. ibid., p. 38.

into the basis, goal and meaning of the human act of response, baptism with water. Baptism with the Spirit is entirely God's act, baptism with water entirely man's. But while there is no confusion between the two acts, water baptism corresponds to Spirit baptism.

The basis of water baptism is the command of the resurrected Christ, who has Himself been baptised by John in the Jordan. Water baptism is a work of obedience.

Jesus' baptism shows us the nature of this obedience. In His baptism He (1) freely and unconditionally submitted Himself to the Lordship of God; (2) He no less freely and unconditionally associated Himself with sinful men; and (3) undertook to do in the service of God and man what He alone could do for men and what as man He alone could do for God.<sup>1</sup> His baptism was free commitment to service. It was not only the sign of this service, but also the first step of its accomplishment, since in humbly submitting to John's baptism He was actually taking the first step of service in the mission which He thereby undertook.

This achievement of Jesus liberates men to follow Him. As the first step of the service for which He frees them, they submit to water baptism. It signifies free submission to service and as a free and obedient act is the first step of that service.

But what does the Christian community have in view when it administers the same act of washing with water to which

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1. ibid., p. 54.



its Lord submitted?<sup>1</sup> When Jesus was baptised, He looked forward to the act of God, in fact to baptism with the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Jesus looked for confirmation of His baptism from heaven. Christian baptism cannot claim to be superior to that of its Lord:<sup>3</sup> even after Pentecost baptism looks forward to the act of God - it, too, looks forward 'to its fulfilment in the future baptism with the Holy Spirit.'<sup>4</sup> Barth insists that baptism is not baptism into Jesus Christ, into the acts of God (how could we take part in the acts of God?), but that it is baptism with a view toward Jesus Christ, looking toward Him, hoping in Him and allowing Him to be its theme and content. We cannot seat ourselves next to God's throne and from there try to effect salvation. Barth speaks of this in a way which recalls the request of James and John to sit on Jesus' right and left hands in the coming kingdom. Such pride stands in contradiction to baptism as service. Baptism takes place with empty hands, a humble, obedient act of hope in Jesus Christ which looks forward to 'the divine act of ~~salvation and revelation~~.<sup>5</sup>

The meaning of baptism is the conversion of man. It is the fully human act of obedience to Jesus Christ and hope in Him.<sup>6</sup> Put another way, baptism as obedience and hope is prayer to Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> As prayer to the risen Christ who commands this obedience and who is its goal, it is prayer

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1. ibid., pp. 68-9.

2. ibid., p. 70.

3. ibid., p. 70.

4. ibid., p. 71.

5. ibid., p. 73.

6. ibid., p. 134.

7. ibid., pp. 210ff.

which is heard, and thus Barth dares to call baptism a saving human work.<sup>1</sup> 'Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' (Acts 2: 21).

The meaning of water baptism is 'the meaning of [the] human action, the action taken by men who are obedient to Jesus Christ and who hope in Him.'<sup>2</sup> The dignity of baptism is endangered when baptism is thought of as an 'immanent divine work'.<sup>3</sup> The sacramental interpretation of baptism must resolutely be rejected because either what men 'will and do is completely overshadowed and obscured by the immanent divine work and word', or, what 'men will and do becomes as such the will and accomplishment of divine work and word....Either way Christian baptism is treated docetically.' There is 'no free human answer to the act and call of the free God.'<sup>4</sup> Also, baptism becomes 'identical with its basis and goal', and therefore 'a strangely competitive duplication of the history of Jesus Christ...'<sup>5</sup>. Properly understood, baptism is not itself a mystery, but it 'responds to a mystery, the sacrament of the history of Jesus Christ.'<sup>6</sup>

In opposing the doctrine of a hidden divine work in baptism, Barth is clearing the way for a positive account of baptism, a non-docetic account.

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1. ibid., p. 210.

2. ibid., p. 101.

3. ibid., p. 101.

4. ibid., p. 102.

5. ibid., p. 102.

6. ibid., p. 102.

Three formal statements about the meaning of baptism define the human action. First, its technical administration is an act of obedience, not a capricious or self-willed event. It is a concrete act, a 'decision' which 'replies' to the divine work of cleansing and renewal.<sup>1</sup> Second, baptism has a social character, involving both candidate and community in witness to the world. Third, baptism has to do with the freedom of candidate and community as both respond to the Lord's freedom. 'Just because a first step is to be taken which does justice to the free, fatherly turning of God to them, the act of baptism must have for all concerned the character of a genuine human decision.'<sup>2</sup> It is a venture for both candidate and community, since neither have any guarantee within themselves concerning 'the future into which they take this first, bold, serious and binding step.'<sup>3</sup> Yet this venture may be made with confidence because God is their stronghold.

The material definition of baptism carries us further into the content of the human response. It is, as we have seen, an act of obedience and hope. This is conversion, since it means leaving the old way of self-will and anxiety for the new way of obedience and trust. Jesus Christ is allowed to command and promise.

We must speak more precisely. In baptism both candidate and community commit themselves. Conversion demands the concrete act of baptism because it answers the concrete act of God. Those who were baptised by John in the specific

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1. ibid., p. 130.

2. ibid., p. 132.

3. ibid., p. 133.

act in the Jordan 'justified God.'<sup>1</sup> Unlike the Pharisees who rejected the will of God for them, and were content with interior repentance, they associated themselves publicly and visibly with the publicans and sinners who could only justify God's judgment and look to His free mercy. As conversion to this God, the God who justifies sinners, it is radical conversion.

We must speak more precisely still. We must have 'a clear picture of the free and responsible human act which takes place.'<sup>2</sup> First, a man obeys the command of Jesus Christ in 'the freedom which has been made his own in Him.'<sup>3</sup> Second, as this act of obedience, a specific renunciation and pledge is given.<sup>4</sup> This pledge and renunciation can be given only in response to the 'renunciation and pledge of God Himself in Jesus Christ.'<sup>5</sup> Man confirms God's No and Yes in baptism. God alone pronounces the No against sin, but in baptism a man buries the old man crucified with Christ. Similarly, God alone speaks the victorious Yes to man, but in baptism a man 'can and should accept, answer, confirm and repeat it.'<sup>6</sup>

Baptism, then, is the twofold answer of renunciation and pledge to the divine salvation of man.<sup>7</sup> It is the human decision made, not by deciding between two paths, like Hercules at the cross roads, but in the will and desire to

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1. ibid., pp. 141f.

2. ibid., p. 153.

3. ibid., p. 154.

4. ibid., p. 158.

5. ibid., p. 158.

6. ibid., p. 160.

7. ibid., p. 162.



witness to the way opened up for men. It is the only possible way for them, but genuine human decision is involved because man is taken seriously as God's partner and man takes his place as this partner. Barth says:

in that which takes place in the sphere of the covenant of grace, we find dialogue and dealings between two who stand in clear encounter, God on the one side and man on the other...so that, while these men can only follow what God says and does, they are all active subjects for their part, and they can and should follow with their own speech and action on the basis of their own responsible decision. (C.D. IV/4, p. 163)

Because infant baptism does not give to baptism the dignity of the free response of the human subject, it is only half a sacrament.

Barth takes up one final problem. Baptism is an act of hope in Jesus Christ, and, with its orientation toward witness in society, it looks toward the future. It is a great and marvellous venture, or, rather, it is the first step of such a venture. But are not the steps which follow baptism uncertain? And does not this throw doubt on the human act of baptism itself? There is an answer: 'the meaning of baptism consists...in the fact that the community and its candidates let Jesus Christ be the future of their action...'<sup>1</sup> This does not mean sitting back and doing nothing, living by cheap grace. No - Jesus Christ brings men into active fellowship with Himself. It means prayer to Him. Baptism is a saving human work only to the extent that it is prayer to the resurrected Christ.<sup>2</sup> In this prayer the Church does not manipulate God but the people

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1. ibid., p. 207.

2. ibid., p. 210.

let God be God [and] they let Him be their God, who has called them and to whom they may call in return, who hears them and who is heard as they may hear Him, and hearing, obey him. (C.D. IV/4, p. 210)

It is an act both humble and bold. Claiming nothing for itself, it gains all. As such, it is a saving human action! (I Pet. 3: 21).

### Baptism into Christ's Vicarious Humanity

In assessing the value of this remarkable document for the meaning of man's turning to God, the following points of approval may be made.

1. By speaking of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, and refusing to tie Him to man's act, Barth allows God to be God in His grace to man. All suggestion that Christ's completed act is distant from men in their present situation and that it needs their act to fill the vacuum is obviated. The Spirit of Christ comes to men in their present and, in His sovereignty, brings men to participate in the conversion accomplished in Christ. Barth thus avoids the solitariness of an anthropomomist interpretation of conversion in which the human subject acts without the divine Subject.

2. By speaking of the Spirit as he does, Barth also obviates the suggestion of Christomonism which was noted earlier in his treatment of man's awakening to conversion. Because the Spirit is allowed to be the free, sovereign Spirit of Christ our Contemporary, He brings man freely to be man. It becomes clear in a way in which it was not earlier in the Dogmatics that 'to belittle what is done to man in Christ is to belittle Him.' Barth thus avoids the

solitariness of a Christomonism in which the divine Subject acts without the answer of the human subject. The sacramentalism which by-passes the act of man is avoided.

3. By speaking of Christ baptising men with His Spirit as he does, Barth liberates the doctrine of Christ's vicarious humanity from all suggestion that Christ performed repentance instead of us, and allows it to become a doctrine of genuine participation in Him. It has recently been argued with great conviction that Jesus Christ is Himself our response to God. Just as at the Lord's table, it is not in the first instance ourselves that we offer, but the cup of salvation which He puts into our hands, so in baptism we plead not our response but Jesus, who is our baptism and our Amen to God's judgment of grace. As Barth puts it: 'It is in His baptism in the Jordan that we are baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire.' It may seem that because this is so, it is faithlessness to see our response to God as the goal of God's grace.

Far from being a Sacrament of our faith and our repentance, or conversion, Baptism is the Sacrament in which we are baptised out of ourselves and into Christ. We are unable to repent as we would, but He gives us repentance and remission of sins. We are baptised into Him who, bearing our sins and guilt and bringing in Himself the perfect submission of man to God, confessed the sins of the world and bore the divine judgment on it. It is in Him alone that we are baptised into true repentance, for in Him we acquiesce in the divine judgment of our sin and accept the forgiveness of His grace. (Church of Scotland Interim Report on Baptism, May 1960, p. 689)

Also, 'we can stand before God and claim Christ as our response.' This may gladly be affirmed, and, without detracting from it, but rather by strengthening it, be developed to say that, because He is our response, we

respond in Him. He gives His response into our hands. As He gives the cup of salvation into our hands so that we offer it, and in offering it, offer and present ourselves, so He gives His baptism into our hands so that we perform it. He was baptised in our place in order that we should be baptised: our response is the purpose and goal of His response. The beautiful doctrine that 'in Him alone we are baptised into true repentance, for in Him we are brought to acquiesce in the divine judgment of our sin and to accept the forgiveness of His grace' must be strengthened also to say (as unfortunately the Church of Scotland Report does not) that in Christ we actually do acquiesce in that judgment, judging ourselves in Him, and accept forgiveness, taking hold of it in Him.

4. By speaking of baptism with the Spirit as he does, Barth allows the human response to be essential to man's full salvation. The Spirit represents to men Christ in His perfected work, and brings them freely to call on God in response to His Word. 'Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Thus, God Himself responds to man's response to Him, and so, without merit but simply as prayerful obedience, man's act becomes a saving act. Since the meaning of baptism consists in this prayer, Barth allows God to act in man's act with a reality and a certainty which neither sacramentalist (and therefore Christomist) nor anabaptist (and therefore anthropomist) interpretations of baptism are able.

5. If man's act in baptism is this empty act of prayer which receives all from God, Barth's placing the doctrine of



baptism within the sphere of ethics, as man's obedient response, is a great liberation for the Church. Baptism does not cease to be a saving event in which the living Christ is savingly at work, but baptism is liberated to be the answer of man to God's fatherly heart. Baptism becomes the obedience of man, and therefore the freedom of His children before Him, in which God and the Son have the response from man which from all eternity They have waited. And His children have that act whereby they can show forth their love to Him.

All of these points concern the personal relationship between God and man in the Spirit. Earlier in this study it was suggested that Barth should consider further the intercourse between God's Spirit and man's spirit, but here, in the final fragment of the Dogmatics, he has given this interaction extended treatment. Nevertheless, he still undervalues the creative work of the Spirit. Barth denies that in baptism with the Spirit men are baptised into Christ. This denial follows from his argument that the being of all men was ontologically converted in Christ's death and resurrection. In view of earlier discussions in this study, it is more correct to say that the Spirit, who proceeds from the ontological conversion which took place in Christ, baptises men into that ontological change. If this is so, man's act in baptism with water, when it is the obedient act of prayer called forth by the Spirit and which calls out for baptism with the Spirit, has even greater meaning as man's conversion than Barth allows. It is a saving human act not only in the sense that in it men begin

actively to live their new life, but also in the sense that the Spirit brings about in them an ontological change. In baptism there really is a baptism into the death of Christ to sin, and a rising to newness of life. Barth's hesitation about the radicalness of Biblical passages where this is argued (e.g., Rom. 6: 1-11) is overcome.

This leads us to a final point. If greater creative work is allowed to the Spirit in His intercourse with the human spirit, it becomes possible to give a richer account of the concreteness and the content of the human act of conversion. As Barth says, in baptism with water man makes a public self-commitment to Christ and makes his first step along the road of that self-commitment. He becomes a soldier of the cross, engaged to confess Christ crucified. As he takes up the life of the cross, he corresponds to Christ who went to the cross for him. But the idea of correspondence is adequate to convey only the formal shape of the new life which he enters. If, however, the Spirit is allowed to bring about an ontological change in men as they call on the Lord in water baptism, men will be seen as being initiated not only into a life of correspondence to Christ crucified, but also a life of suffering service. Their correspondence to Christ will have real content. It will be a real sharing in Christ's own baptism.

### CONCLUSION

In pursuing the question of man's turning to God, it has been found that Barth is basically correct to say that this takes place in Jesus Christ. As the One in whom God has turned to man, He is also the One in whom man has turned to God. This turning is not locked up in Himself, as though His person were intrinsically private and cut off from others, but, through His Spirit, He communicates Himself and the turning He accomplished to sinners, and thus brings them actively to participate in His turning to God.

This means that all that the sinner needs is in Christ. He does not first have to repent (as though this were possible) before Christ is his Saviour. On the contrary, Christ's repentance makes it possible for him to repent; His forgiveness is the ground of his repentance. In this way, gospel precedes law and is its content. The Christian message is wholly good news for the sinner.

Barth's treatment of these evangelical themes is, however, marred by a slight tendency to Christomonism. Though it would be quite unfair to call him a Christomonist, his failure fully to develop his doctrine of the triune God, and especially that of the Spirit, prevents him from allowing all that is in Christ wholly to reach individual men. His failure to give due weight to the origin of divine election in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ prevents him from celebrating the goal of God's election in His sons who elect Him; and his failure to give the Spirit His proper place in Christ's election of God and conversion of human nature

circumscribes the completeness with which Christ communicates His conversion of man to individual men.

Again, this study found itself in wholehearted agreement with Barth that the free, uncaused and utterly gracious turning of God to the men who had turned away from Him aims at their corresponding free turning back to Himself. On the basis of His turning to man simply for man's sake, He seeks man's turning to Him for His sake, 'for nothing'. This turning was fulfilled in the cross of Christ, and it was vindicated in His resurrection in such a way that sinners are granted the new being in which to turn to Him for their own part. But it was found that Barth does not allow his own vision to come to its full realisation. By holding that all men have their being in Christ's salvation prior to their personal, active sharing in Him, he does not allow man's turning to God to have its full significance as his free act of correspondence to God's free turning to him. There is a sense in which he is turned to God without his free act. Similarly, Barth's talk about the impossibility of sin, and his denial that the tempter is the spiritual creature who chose against God's grace, has the serious effect of securing man's turning to God to some extent at least independently of his own personal act, and to that extent of robbing God's free grace of its goal in man's corresponding free turning to Him. In making these criticisms of Barth there was no desire to exalt man's act for its own sake. On the contrary, it was felt that only by speaking of Jesus' achieving the ontological impossibility of sin in face of the very real possibility of not choosing God (as represented



in Satan) could content be given to Barth's claim that God's grace aims at man's free decision for Him. Nor was there any desire to think of man exercising the freedom of choice of a Hercules at the cross-roads, a notion which Barth abhors because it would mean that God sets both good and evil before man. On the contrary it was argued that theology must witness more definitely than does Barth to the interaction of God's Spirit with man's spirit, and especially to Pentecost as the goal of God's self-giving to man on earth and thus of God's giving Himself actually to indwell man and to bring him freely to give himself to God. The Spirit awakens men not to neutral freedom of choice, but to that responsibility in which they refuse evil and choose good.

It was also found necessary to argue for a third strengthening of Barth's understanding of conversion. God's free turning to man aims at man's free turning to Him on that basis. This is the meaning of the covenant, the fellowship of God with man and man with God in which God loves man as Himself and man loves God and his neighbour. Man broke this fellowship, but Jesus Christ fulfilled it by giving Himself for sinners on the cross. Through His Spirit, who is the essence of this fellowship, He brings men to share in the free being together of God and man in Him. The Church would benefit greatly by listening to this uncompromising witness to God's satisfaction of His love for man in Christ and to our satisfaction in Him. In particular, all ideas of the satisfaction of the law as the condition of God's love for man, and of man's worthiness (whether in his repentance or in his faith) as a condition of salvation,

would be exposed as limitations of the gospel. But Barth's account needs to be given greater content. The work of the Scottish theologians, Edward Irving, Thomas Erskine and McLeod Campbell was found helpful in this task. With their aid, Christ's obedient repentance for sinners was seen as His loving His brethren as Himself, as His loving them to the point where He embodied His Father's yearning and sorrowing love for sinners. This personal, spiritual sorrow was seen as filling out with rich content Barth's account of Christ's judgment in our place. Further, the Spirit was seen to be the strength in which Christ accomplished this loving of His brethren as Himself. By the Spirit He both bore the sins of others as His own and also gives these others His righteousness. Since it is by the Spirit that He does this, He does not include them in Himself without bringing them actively to share in Him. By the Spirit Christ brings them to share in His repentance for sin, thus giving them access to genuine repentance of their own. This understanding of the Spirit enriches the content of conversion not only in relation to justification, but also in relation to man's act of turning and his vocation. Christ took up fallen human nature. By the Spirit He prosecuted an awesome battle against the world, the flesh and the devil, triumphed over them, and presented our humanity spotless before the Creator. By the same Spirit He now brings sinners to a similar conflict in which they actually turn from sin to God. Again, in man's vocation, Christ does not call man on the basis of his being already in Christ, but on the basis of His power to enlighten them by His Spirit to know

themselves as those for whom He gave Himself. In this way, He does not unite them with Himself merely by virtue of His objective work for them, only by His calling them with the drawing of His infinite love, tenderness and courtesy.

These modifications and developments of Barth give his theology a more thoroughly evangelical thrust. It becomes clearer that the entire being of God aims at man. The Spirit comes into closer engagement with individual men. Since this Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, Barth's doctrine of our conversion in Christ is enriched in meaning. All that is His is ours, but in such a way that we share in Him only as He makes us willing to live in Him. He does not overshadow our decision, but makes it necessary to Him. As He shares Himself with us, doing so through the Spirit who enters into gracious engagement with our spirit, He liberates our subjectivity into the freedom it could not find in itself. He gives us the courage to repent of our attempt to base ourselves on ourselves, and to trust Him. In this courage, we turn to Him who has turned to us.

It is hard to say how much Barth himself would be in sympathy with the proposals made in this study, but in at least three respects they should meet with his approval. First, Barth himself recognised that his theology needed to pay more attention to the Spirit. Second, this necessarily involves a turning toward man, something he saw as much needed in contemporary theology. And, finally, he had no wish to create a school of theologians who merely repeated what he had said. It is hoped that this study goes some way toward saying the things which must be said about man if we pray with genuine seriousness the prayer so often found in the Dogmatics: 'Veni Creator Spiritus.'

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